THÉOPHILE
GAUTIER

BORN - 1811
DIED - 1872

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The Gascon Edition

THE COMPLETE WORKS *of*
THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Volume XII

Art and Criticism
The Magic Hat

—

Enamels and Cameos
and Other Poems
(TRANSLATED BY AGNES LEE)

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Contents

ART AND CRITICISM

Introduction	*Page*	3
Charles Baudelaire	"	17
Victor Hugo	"	127
Of the Excellence of Poetry	"	210
Of the Utility of Poetry	"	219
Civilization and the Plastic Arts	"	226
Hoffmann's Tales	"	236
The Barber of Seville	"	247
In Greece	"	272
THE MAGIC HAT	"	311

Art and Criticism

Introduction

THE various articles contained in this volume are all, save the last, linked together by what remained to the end the dominant thought in Gautier's mind: the love and worship of beauty. Each series, for there are series, has its own characteristics. The criticism on Baudelaire and the two articles on "The Excellence of Poetry," and "The Utility of Poetry," are marked by the profound conviction of the superiority of verse over every other form; the articles on Hugo breathe all the determined enthusiasm of a Romanticist, and the persuasion that the leader of the school had said no more than the truth when he affirmed that the drama, as constituted by him, was the final, the definitive form of literature in modern times; the chapters on Greece exhibit the overpowering sense of the very perfection of beauty, attained by a race wholly different from the French, by methods quite opposed to those of the

Gothic artists of the Middle Ages, and by the application of principles entirely different from those upon which the Romanticists themselves had worked and were still working.

It would scarcely be possible to find, in all the voluminous writings of Gautier, a stronger proof of the fact that he was first and foremost an artist, and only afterwards the adherent of a school. Greek architecture is the very incarnation of the highest and purest classicism; it has nothing of the upward-springing, multitudinous conception of beauty which is distinctive of Gothic art, the art which the Romanticists, under the leadership of Chateaubriand first and Hugo next, had restored to the place it had long since so unjustly lost. But whether the classical architecture of Greece was or was not like unto the work of the mediæval architects mattered little to Gautier, once he beheld the Parthenon, the Propylæa, the Temple of Nike Apteros, and the Erechtheium. He at once owned the spell of the "miracle," as Renan has so well termed it, and his passionate feeling for the beautiful found as complete satisfaction in the masterpieces of Greek art as in any other form.

It may seem to many readers, to most readers, of

these volumes that not only is there nothing strange in this, but that it is quite reasonable. The latter part of the proposition is entirely true; the genuine artist, the man whose taste is really cultured, admires equally the great works of the one and the other school, but at the time when Gautier wrote, the bitter struggle between the two doctrines had not wholly died away. Romanticism, as a living and effective force in literature and art, was being displaced by Realism, and the names of Balzac and Flaubert were attracting the attention that had formerly, and not so long ago, been concentrated almost exclusively upon the champions and representatives of the brilliant company of idealists. Gautier, besides, had been deeply imbued with the principles of Romanticism, and had been one of the most earnest and enthusiastic opponents of the Classical school, though it must be owned that there was little, if anything, in common between the real classical work of antiquity and the wretched pseudo-classicism against which the youth of 1830 revolted. None the less, Gautier seems never to have felt for the really classical work of French writers and artists anything approaching the admiration he bestowed freely upon his collaborators in the new movement or which he so

gladly accords to the monuments on the Acropolis. Of the great writers of the golden age of classical literature in France, it is Corneille and Molière alone that he really enjoys and really admires; and even in Corneille's work, the more purely classical plays are disregarded by him, and the "Cid," "Don Sancho of Aragon," and one or two others are quoted by him and admired, while the noblest play of all, "Polyeucte," is not mentioned at all. As for Racine, he has not studied him with interest or deep feeling, and the wondrous beauty of his work is apparently unappreciated by him. This is not in the least surprising. There is no connection between the purely emotional, not to say sensational drama of Victor Hugo and his followers, and the stately, lofty, spiritual beauty of Racine's greatest tragedies.

It must be borne in mind, in reading the accounts of the Hugo dramas in this volume, that the early impression made upon Gautier by "Hernani" was of the deepest. The first performance of that play, as the reader will remember, was the great epoch of his life. He dated everything back to it, and the last words he penned bore upon this subject. To him Hugo was the sov'ran poet and master, whose glory none could

equal, and to whom France owed a drama fully equal to Shakespeare's. How utterly mistaken Gautier was in this estimate, it has not taken many years to prove, and, indeed, he himself had the painful opportunity of witnessing the reaction against the author of "Marion Delorme."

There are two striking instances, in this very volume, of the effect this intense admiration for Hugo had upon Gautier in the way of blinding him, who was usually so clear-sighted, to the weakness of the Romanticist drama in general, and Hugo's plays in particular. As he tells us himself, the play entitled "The King's Sport" ("Le Roi s'amuse") failed when it was first performed; yet he does not hesitate to declare that "this same 'The King's Sport,' so outrageously hissed, is Hugo's best play." It is nothing of the kind, and it must surely have been in a fit of irritation against the public that Gautier allowed himself to make such a startling assertion. He had been engaged, he was then engaged in educating that public to an understanding and an appreciation of art, and it was exasperating to him to see any one work of Hugo disdained, flouted, or scouted. Yet this time the public was right, and Gautier was wrong, as was again the case when "The

Burgraves" was brought out with much flourish of trumpets, only to fall dead as a door-nail — and most deservedly.

This conclusion may not commend itself to the reader of Gautier's admirable, picturesque, and, on the whole, correct appreciation of the "trilogy." Yet it is the only conclusion possible *when one sees the play performed.* "The Burgraves," when read, strikes one as containing many superb passages and very exciting situations. That in which, for instance, the old mendicant, who is none else than the Emperor, is ushered in, amid the blare of trumpets and the resonant clash of spears, must surely be, thinks the reader, immensely impressive; and still more awe-inspiring and thrilling must be the one in which, after Hatto's insults to Otbert, and the challenge contemptuously thrown out by the former, the beggar suddenly steps forward, declares himself the champion of the young archer, and, in reply to the taunt of the burgrave, exclaims: "I am the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and here is the cross of Charlemagne!" Surely this must move every one and fill every heart with tremendous sense of tragedy. Well, as a matter of fact, it does the very opposite; it urges to laughter, for anything more

utterly disproportionate than the claim of the beggar and his appearance it is impossible to imagine. And be it remembered that this effect, and the unending sense of weariness that never leaves the spectator, was that produced upon audiences eagerly desirous of rapturously applauding the work, and that the play itself was performed by the first actors in the world, the company of the Théâtre-Français, on the occasion of the Victor Hugo centenary in February of this year 1902. Everything had been done that could be done to make the play a success, yet it proved dismally dull, and though people politely concealed their yawns, they yawned none the less. The verdict of the spectators of 1843, who might be charged with prejudice against the Romanticist drama, of which they had had a surfeit, was amply confirmed by the verdict of the splendid houses assembled to celebrate the fame of the greatest of modern French poets.

It is a peculiarity of Hugo's plays that when they do charm, as is unquestionably the case with "Hernani" even now, and, to a less degree, with "Ruy Blas," the result is largely due to the beauty of the verse. The moment he leaves verse for prose, much of the magic, nearly all the magic vanishes, and

there is left to the spectator but a melodrama, more or less wildly extravagant and forced. Such is, unquestionably, "The King's Sport," absolutely revolting in its main idea; such is "Angelo," which, notwithstanding the praise Gautier lavishes upon it, is so unreal, and so excessive in its mysteriousness and striving after terror that it bores quickly. Such to a very much less degree, is "Lucrezia Borgia," in which there are really thrilling and powerful scenes.

It is curious to notice that so intent were the author and his admirers upon the effect of "local colour" and the production of startling contrast that they one and all failed to see the inherent weakness of the plots and the characters they grew so enthusiastic over. "Ruy Blas" is a good example of this, and it may be quoted all the more readily as, with "Hernani," it is the only play of Hugo's that has in any measure remained in the regular repertory. Ruy Blas, so glowingly painted by Hugo and so superbly brought out by Gautier, is, when all is said and done, nothing more than a "loafer," who indulges in poetic dreams and ambitious fancies, but meanwhile does not scruple to stoop pretty low ere he is taken up and made a lackey by the exceedingly conventional melodrama villain, Don Salluste.

The more the play proceeds, and the higher and the more powerful does Ruy Blas become under his new name Don Cæsar de Bazan, the plainer it is that this wonderful genius is an absolute fool, incapable of seeing his opportunities and consequently of utilising them, and wholly incapable of perceiving that he has the whip-hand of the "tiger." But, of course, one must not expect character study or character drawing from a Romanticist, and least of all from Victor Hugo. The drama, as he understood it, did not consist in a real study of human nature, but in the presentation of striking scenes and a mingling of the grave and the gay.

This point must be borne in mind in order to understand and appreciate Gautier's laudatory accounts. Victor Hugo and his school had determined to create and introduce upon the French stage a new form, to which they gave the name of "drame." Hugo insisted that this form, which was, and was to remain, the definitive form in literature, was neither tragedy nor comedy, but the actual representation of life concentrated for the benefit of the spectator. It was the outcome of all previous strivings after the ideal dramatic form, which it realised. It was to present at once the

loftiest and the most familiar views of life; it was to mingle tears and laughter; to be varied, supple, in a word, life itself. The name "drame" was selected in order to differentiate this form from the consecrated dramatic forms that then reigned in literature, and it is in this restricted sense that the word "drama" almost invariably recurs in the articles that follow.

It does not follow, because Gautier was in error as to the real value of these plays, and mistaken in his belief that they were destined to endure, that his account of them, his criticism on them is valueless. Far from it; for his articles enable the present-day reader to form a just conception of the genuine enthusiasm excited in a highly cultured mind by works that now pall upon the taste. It is an interesting study to trace this change in public taste and to discover the reasons therefor, but it is a study too large for the bounds of an Introduction.

On the other hand, Gautier shows his great skill as a critic when he analyses the reasons for the popularity of Hoffmann in France, and yet more in his exceedingly valuable and most fascinating review of Baudelaire's "Flowers of Evil." This latter piece of work is undoubtedly one of the best things he has ever done,

and is of the utmost value in enabling the reader to get at the heart of Gautier's poetic doctrine. While speaking of Baudelaire and showing what the latter believed, he is also setting forth his own creed and defending his own preferences. This aspect will be studied in the Introduction to the next and last volume, which will comprise the celebrated "Enamels and Cameos," and other poems.

A word must be said concerning Gautier's own dramatic work. It is not very large in quantity nor very remarkable in quality. It consists of a clever *pasticcio* of the old Miracle plays, entitled "The Devil's Tear," of two or three light sketches, of which the one given here is about the best, and of a number of libretti for ballets. Gautier lacked time to produce a really good piece of dramatic work; driven as he was by the exigencies of the daily press for which he wrote, he could not bestow the care and attention upon a play which are necessary if a really good drama is to be turned out. He had the dramatic instinct, and he knew how to turn a dialogue, to work up a scene, and to paint a character, and it is the more regrettable therefore that he has not left a more important proof of his powers in this line. "The Magic Hat" is, of

course, inspired by the lighter comedies so much in vogue in the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and which, in a modern dress, still delight the theatre-goer at the present time. It is bright, lively, spirited, and witty. Unpretentious, it fulfils its mission of amusing the spectator, and the fact that it was revived at the Odéon is proof sufficient that it had real merit.

The chapters on Greece were, like so many other chapters in Gautier's work, intended to form the beginning of a book on Greece, but the intention was never carried out, for the old reason: lack of time and the constant occurrence of new subjects interesting Gautier or the public.

Art and Criticism

ART AND CRITICISM

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

I FIRST met Baudelaire towards the middle of the year 1849, at Pimodan House (Hôtel Lauzun) where I had a quaint apartment near Fernand Boissard's, communicating with the latter's rooms by a secret stair concealed in the thickness of the wall, and which must have been haunted by the ghosts of the beauties whom Lauzun loved of yore. Among the dwellers in the house were the superb Maryx who, when still quite young, posed to Ary Scheffer for his "Mignon," and, later, to Paul Delaroche for his "Fame Distributing Wreaths;" and that other beauty, then in her fullest bloom, whom Clesinger represented in his "Woman and Serpent," a piece of statuary in which pain bears the appearance of a paroxysm of pleasure and which is imbued with an intensity of life which no sculptor had yet attained to and which will never be surpassed.

Charles Baudelaire's talent was as yet unsuspected, and he was quietly preparing himself for fame with a

tenacity of purpose that equalled his inspiration. His name, however, was already becoming known among poets and artists with a certain thrill of expectation, and the younger generation, that was succeeding to the great generation of 1830, seemed to build great hopes upon him. In the mysterious conclave in which coming reputations manifest themselves, his was looked upon as the most promising of all.

I had often heard of him, but I was not acquainted with any of his works. I was impressed by his aspect. He wore his very black hair cut quite short, and this hair of his, with its regular points on his dazzlingly white brow, formed a sort of Saracen helmet. His brown eyes had a deep, spiritual expression, and his glance was almost oppressively penetrating. His mouth, outlined by a silky mustache, had the mobile, voluptuous, ironical sinuosity of the mouths of faces painted by Leonardo da Vinci. His nose, shapely and delicate, somewhat rounded and with palpitating nostrils, seemed to be scenting faint and distant odours; a strong dimple, like the sculptor's final touch, marked the chin; his close-shaven cheeks, the bluish tone of which was made more velvety by rice-powder, contrasted with the ruddy hue of the cheek-bones. His

neck, of feminine elegance and whiteness, showed freely out of a turned-down collar and a narrow-check tie of Madras silk. His dress consisted of a coat of shiny, lustrous stuff, snuff-coloured trousers, white stockings, and patent-leather shoes; every garment scrupulously clean and neat, with a marked stamp of English simplicity, apparently intended to denote a breaking away from the artist fashion of sporting soft felt hats, velvet jackets, red jerseys, huge beards, and wild heads of hair. There was nothing new-looking or striking in his dress. Charles Baudelaire was one of those quiet dandies who have their clothes rubbed with emery paper in order to take off the Sunday and brand-new gloss so dear to Philistines and so unbearable to well-bred men. Later on, indeed, he shaved off his mustache, considering that it was a survival of picturesque *chic* which it was childish and bourgeois-like to preserve. Thus freed from all superfluous down, his face recalled that of Laurence Sterne, a resemblance increased by Baudelaire's habit of pressing his forefinger against his temple when speaking, which is the attitude, as is well known, of the English humourist in the portrait prefixed to his works.

Such was the outward impression made upon me, at our first meeting, by the future author of "The Flowers of Evil."

In the "New Parisian Cameos," by Theodore de Banville, one of the dearest and most faithful friends of the poet whose death we deplore, I find the following portrait of Baudelaire in youth, before letters, as it were. I must be allowed to transcribe here these lines of prose, which are as perfect as the finest verse. They give us a little known and rapidly disappearing picture of Baudelaire, which is not to be found elsewhere.

"A portrait painted by Émile Deroy, and which is one of the few masterpieces of modern art, shows us Charles Baudelaire at twenty, at the time when, rich, happy, beloved, and already famous, he was writing his first poems, acclaimed by Paris which rules the world. It is a rare example of a really divine face, uniting in itself every chance, every power, and the most irresistible charms. The eyebrows are clean and long, with a soft broad sweep, over warm, richly-coloured Oriental lids; the eyes, long, black, profound, with a glance of unmatched fire, caressing and masterful, take in, question, and reflect every object around. The graceful, ironic nose, of firm shape, the

tip rounded, and somewhat projecting, at once makes one think of the poet's famous line: 'My soul is borne fluttering on scents as other men's souls are borne fluttering on music.' The mouth is arched and already matured by talent, but at this moment still of a rich purple fleshiness that recalls the splendour of fruit. The chin is rounded, but strongly modelled, and as powerful as Balzac's. The whole face is of a warm brown pallor, under which show the rosy hues of rich, noble blood. It is adorned with a youthful, ideal beard; the beard of a young god, and on the broad, lofty, superbly formed brow falls black, thick, beauteous hair, curled and wavy as that of Paganini, that ripples upon a neck worthy of Achilles or Antinoüs."

Although this portrait should not be taken literally, seen as it is through the double idealisation of painting and poetry, it nevertheless was true and accurate at the time. Charles Baudelaire enjoyed a season of supreme beauty and perfect bloom, as this faithful witness enables me to affirm. A poet or an artist is but rarely known under his first and most attractive aspect. It is only later that fame comes to him, when the fatigue of study, the struggle for life, and the tortures of passion have altered his original appearance. He

leaves behind him but a worn, withered mask on which pain has put bruises or wrinkles for stigmata; and it is this latest aspect, which has a beauty of its own, that is remembered. This was the case with Alfred de Musset. When quite young he looked like Phœbus Apollo, with his fair golden hair, and David d'Angers' medallion shows him to us almost with the face of a god. In Baudelaire's case, in addition to a peculiar avoidance of whatever might smack of affectation, there mingled a certain exotic savour, a distant perfume, as it were, of sunnier climes. I understood the reason of this when I was told that Baudelaire had travelled a great deal in India.

Contrary to the free and easy ways of artists, Baudelaire piqued himself on his careful observance of conventionalities, and he was so polite as to appear mannered. He weighed his words, used only the choicest expressions, and pronounced some words in a particular way, as if he wished to underline them and to give them a mysterious importance. He had italics and capital letters in the tones of his voice. Caricature, which was held in high honour at Pimodan House, was contemned by him as being art-student and coarse, but he did not refuse to indulge in paradoxes and utterness.

In the simplest, most natural, and perfectly easy air, exactly as if he were proclaiming a commonplace on the beauty or unpleasantness of the weather, he would put forward a satanically monstrous axiom or maintain with icy coolness a mathematically extravagant theory, for he was rigorously methodical in the development of his absurdities. His wit did not show in happy hits or flashes, but he looked at everything from a personal point of view that altered lines in the same way as looking at things from far above or far below, and he perceived relations between them that were concealed from others and which struck one by their logical oddity. His gestures were slow, few, and quiet, and never wide-armed, for he had a horror of the Southerner's way of gesticulating. He also disliked volubility of speech, and English reserve was to him a proof of good taste. He may be said to have been a dandy who had strayed into Bohemia, but who while there preserved his rank, his manners, and that self-respect characteristic of a man imbued with Brummel's principles.

This, then, is how he appeared to me at our first meeting, the remembrance of which is as fresh in my mind as if it had taken place yesterday. Indeed, I could paint the scene from memory.

We were in the large drawing-room, decorated in the finest Louis XIV style, the woodwork of which is touched up with gilding of a wondrous tone, albeit tarnished, and adorned with a corbelled cornice, on which some pupil of Lesueur or Poussin, who had worked at the Hôtel Lambert, had painted in the mythological taste of the day nymphs pursued among the reeds by satyrs. On the great serancolin marble mantelpiece, with its red and white spotting, stood, by way of a clock, a gilded elephant, in trappings like those worn by the elephant Porus rides in the battle scene by Lebrun, and supporting on its back a fighting howdah, on which was placed a dial enamelled with blue figures. The arm-chairs and sofas were old, and upholstered in tapestries of faded hue representing hunting-scenes from designs by Oudry and Desportes. It was in this room that were held the meetings of the Hascheecheen Club, of which I was a member.

As I have said, Fernand Boissard was the host here. His short, curly fair hair, his red and white complexion, his gray eyes sparkling with wit and brilliancy, his red lips and pearly teeth, indicated a Rubens-like vigour and exuberance of health, and gave promise of a life that would exceed the span allotted to man. But, alas!

none of us can foresee another's fate! Boissard, who lacked not a single requisite to happiness, who had not even known the jolly wretchedness of eldest sons, died a few years ago, after having long survived himself, of a disease like that which struck down Baudelaire. Boissard was an uncommonly able fellow; he was endowed with great breadth of mind; he appreciated painting, poetry, and music with equal facility, but the dilettante in him somewhat, no doubt, injured the artist. He spent too much time in admiring, and wore himself out with enthusiasm; yet, had he been constrained by necessity's iron hand, he would certainly have made an excellent painter, as is proved by the success he won at the Salon with his "Incident during the Retreat from Russia." But, though he did not give up painting, he allowed himself to be drawn away by the other arts; he played the violin, got up quartets, studied the scores of Bach, Beethoven, Meyerbeer, and Mendelssohn, learned foreign languages, wrote criticisms, and composed lovely sonnets. He was a great voluptuary in matters of art, and no one enjoyed masterpieces with more refinement, passion, and sensuality than he did, but by dint of admiring the beautiful, he forgot to express it, and he fancied he had rendered what he had

felt so deeply. His conversation was delightful, bright, and sparkling with unexpected good things. He possessed that rare gift, the power to invent sallies and clever remarks; all manner of pleasantly quaint expressions, Italian *concetti* and Spanish *agudezas*, flashed out as he spoke, like Callot's fantastic figures indulging in graceful and comical contortions. Enamoured, like Baudelaire, of unusual sensations, even if they were perilous, he insisted on entering those "artificial heavens," for the false ecstasies of which one has to pay so dearly, and no doubt his robust and splendid constitution was injured by the abuse of hascheech.

This tribute to a friend of my youth, with whom I lived under the same roof, to a Romanticist of the brilliant days whom fame left unknown, for he prized too highly the celebrity of others to think of acquiring it for himself, is not out of place here, in an account of a mutual friend, now dead.

On the day of my meeting with Baudelaire there was present also Jean Feuchères, a sculptor of the race of the Jean Goujons, the Germain Pilons, and the Benvenuto Cellinis, whose work, so full of taste, invention, and grace, has almost completely disappeared, having been seized upon by manufacturers and trades-

men, and ascribed — and well it deserved to be — to the most illustrious artists, and thus sold at a higher price to rich collectors, who, as a matter of fact, were not swindled. Besides being an admirable sculptor, Feuchères was also a wonderful mimic, and no actor could bring out a character as he did. He invented the comic dialogues of Sergeant Bridais and Private Pitou, which have prodigiously increased in number, and even now compel irresistible laughter. Feuchères was the first to die, and of the four artists who were met at that time in the drawing-room of Pimodan House, I only am left.

On the sofa, half-reclining and leaning on a cushion, in an attitude of immobility of which she had acquired the habit through posing to artists, Maryx, wearing a white gown quaintly spotted with polka dots that resembled gouts of blood, was listening in a vague sort of a way to the paradoxes enunciated by Baudelaire, without the least expression of surprise showing upon her features of the purest Oriental type, while shifting her rings from her left to her right hand. And such hands! as perfect as her body, of which the beauty has been preserved by a cast.

By the window, the Serpent woman (it would not

do to tell her real name) had thrown on an arm-chair her black lace cape and the most fetching little green hood ever turned out by Lucy Hocquet or Mme. Baudrand, and was shaking out her beautiful red-brown hair, still wet, for she had just come from the swimming-baths; from her whole person, draped in muslin, streamed, as from a naiad, the cool scent of the bath. She encouraged the speakers to the play of wit by her glances and her smiles, and from time to time put in a word, sometimes quizzing, sometimes approving, when the tourney recommenced more briskly than ever.

Gone are those delightful leisure hours when decamerons of poets, artists, and fair women met to talk literature, art, and love, as in the days of Boccaccio. Time, death, and the stern claims of life have dispersed the groups bound by free sympathy, but the remembrance of them is still dear to those who were fortunate enough to be of them, and it is with involuntary emotion that I pen these lines.

Shortly after this first meeting Baudelaire called on me to bring me a volume of verse from two absent friends. He has himself related this visit in a literary article of which I am the subject, in terms of such respectful admiration that I dare not transcribe it. From

that day there arose between us a friendship in which Baudelaire always insisted on maintaining the attitude of a favourite disciple in the presence of a sympathetic master, although his talent was wholly his own and sprang simply from his own individuality. Never, even when we were most intimate, did he fail to be deferential to a degree that I considered excessive and which I should have cheerfully dispensed with. He testified this deference openly, and on many occasions; and the dedication of "The Flowers of Evil," which is made to me, has preserved, in its lapidary style, the absolute expression of my poet friend's devotion.

I do not lay stress on these points for the purpose of praising myself, but because they show one side, a little known one, of Baudelaire's character. This man, whom some seek to depict as of a fiendish nature, and enamoured of evil and depravation (literary evil and depravation, of course), was, on the contrary, of a most loving and admiring disposition. Now the characteristic trait of Satan is that he is incapable of love or admiration. Light hurts him, and glory is a sight so unbearable to him that he veils his eyes with his bat-like wings. But no one, even in the fervent days of Romanticism, respected and adored the masters

more than Baudelaire. He was always ready to pay them the meed of incense that was their due, and without any servility as a disciple, without any fanaticism as a follower, for he was himself a master, with his own realm, his own subjects, and his own mint.

It may be desirable, after having shown two portraits of Baudelaire in the bloom of his youth and the fulness of his strength, to depict him as he appeared in the latter years of his life, ere disease had laid its hand upon him and sealed the lips that were never again to open here below. His face had become thinner, and more spiritual; his eyes seemed larger; his nose had become firmer and more prominent; his lips had closed mysteriously and seemed to contain sarcastic secrets in their corners. Tones denoting weariness and sunburn mingled with the once ruddy hues of the cheeks. The brow, slightly bald, had gained in grandeur and in solidity, as it were, and might have been carved out of some peculiarly hard marble. His hair, fine, silky, long, and already thinner as well as almost quite white, framed in his face, at once youthful and old, and imparted to it an almost sacerdotal look.

Charles Baudelaire was born in Paris, April 21, 1821, in the Rue Hautefeuille, in one of those old

houses with a turret at the corner, which our ædiles, too fond of straight lines and broad streets, have no doubt swept away. He was the son of Baudelaire, formerly the friend of Condorcet and Cabanis, a very distinguished and very well-read man, who had preserved the fine manners of the eighteenth century, which the pretentiously rough manners of the Republican era did not do away with as completely as is supposed. This trait persisted in the poet, whose manners remained always extremely urbane. Baudelaire does not appear to have been a phenomenal boy or to have won many prizes at the end of his school years. He found it rather difficult, indeed, to get through his examinations, and obtained his degree almost by a favour. Upset, no doubt, by the unexpected questions, the clever and really well prepared lad seemed to be a dolt. I have not the least intention of putting forward this apparent stupidity as a mark of talent; a lad may win the highest prize and yet be very clever; it merely emphasizes the fact that it is unsafe to bank upon academic tests. While the schoolboy may be absent-minded or lazy, or taken up by other matters, rather, the real character of the man is slowly forming, unknown to parents and teachers.

M. Baudelaire, the father, died, and his widow, Charles's mother, married General Aupick, who later became ambassador at Constantinople. Before long dissensions arose in the family on account of the precocious literary vocation manifested by young Baudelaire. The fears experienced by parents when the fatal gift of poesy manifests itself in a son, are, alas! but too well-founded, and it is wrong, in my opinion, for writers of biographies to reproach fathers and mothers with lack of intelligence and with taking commonplace views of life. They are quite right, are the parents. For apart from pecuniary troubles, how sad, precarious, and wretched a life is that of the man who of his own free will enters upon the Way of Sorrows called a literary life! From the moment he does so he may look upon himself as cut off from his fellowmen; he ceases to act, to live; he becomes a spectator of life. Every sensation he experiences has to be analysed by him; involuntarily he separates his two selves, and when he lacks any other subject takes to spying upon himself. If he has no corpse at hand, he stretches himself out on the black marble table, and, by a prodigy of frequent occurrence in literature, drives the dissecting knife into his own heart.

Then what endless, obstinate struggles with ideas, difficult to grasp as Proteus, assuming every possible form to avoid being caught, and yielding up their meaning only when constrained to exhibit themselves under their true aspect! And even when an idea has been seized and is held panting and breathless under one's knee, it has to be raised up again, clothed, indued with the robe of style, so difficult to weave, to dye, to arrange in graceful or in majestic folds. When this work is of long duration, the nerves become strung, the brain overheated, sensitiveness becomes over acute, and neurosis supervenes, attended by its train of mysterious uneasiness, insomnia, and hallucination, undefinable pains, morbid fancies, unreasoning enthusiasm, and motiveless antipathy, mad bursts of energy and utter prostration, thirst for stimulants and distaste for any healthy food. I am not exaggerating in any degree; more than one recent death can testify to that. And I have in mind, too, only poets of talent, who had gained fame and who, at least, died in the enjoyment of a realised ideal. What would it be were I to descend into the limbo where moan, in the company of babes, still-born vocations, abortive attempts, larvæ of ideas that won neither wings nor shapes? Desire is not

power, and love is not possession. Faith is not sufficient; one must have the gift. In literature as in theology, works are useless if grace be wanting.

Although parents cannot even suspect the existence of this hell of wretchedness, — for, to know it properly, one must have descended its winding circles, not led by a Vergil or a Dante, but by a Lousteau, a Lucien de Rubempré, or other newspaper man described by Balzac, — they nevertheless instinctively perceive the dangers and sorrows of a literary or artistic life, and they strive to turn from it the children they love, and for whom they desire to secure a humanly fortunate position in life.

Once only, since the earth began revolving round the sun, have a father and mother ardently desired to have a son in order that they might make a poet of him. The child was consequently given the most brilliant literary education, and through the hideous irony of fate became Chapelain, the author of "The Maid." Surely that was hard luck!

In order to divert Baudelaire from the obstinacy with which he clung to his literary ambitions, he was sent travelling a long way off. Shipped on board a vessel and recommended to the master, he traversed the Indian

Ocean, visited the islands of Mauritius, Reunion, and Madagascar, and Ceylon, possibly, as also a few places in the peninsula of the Ganges. But he never swerved from his resolve to become a literary man. All efforts to interest him in trade were futile; the sale of his own share of the venture troubled him not, nor did a deal in cattle intended to furnish the English in India with beefsteaks attract him more powerfully. All he brought back from that long voyage was a sensation of splendid, dazzling beauty that remained with him until his death. He admired the heavens in which shone constellations unknown in Europe; the magnificent, giant vegetation with its penetrating odours; the quaintly elegant pagodas; the brown figures swathed in white draperies, the exotic nature, so warm, so tremendous, so richly coloured. In his verse he often forsakes the fogs and mud of Paris to fly back to the lands of light, colour, and perfume. In some of his most sombre poems there often comes an opening through which, instead of blackened chimneys and smoky roofs, are seen the azure seas of Ind, the golden sands along which flits the graceful form of a semi-nude maid of Malabar bearing a jar upon her head. It may be taken for granted — without trespassing beyond reasonable

bounds upon the poet's private life — that it was during the course of this voyage that he acquired his love for the sable Venus, whom he ever after worshipped.

On his return from these distant wanderings, he had attained his majority. There was no longer any reason — not even a pecuniary one, for he was rich, for a time, at least — to run counter to Baudelaire's vocation. It had been strengthened by his opposition to obstacles, and it had been impossible to move him from his purpose. Settling in a small bachelor's apartment, in that same Pimodan House where I met him later, as I have related at the beginning of this article, he began the life of work, constantly interrupted and constantly resumed, of dissimilar studies and fruitful idleness, which is the life of every man of letters engaged in seeking his own line. Baudelaire soon discovered it. He observed, not on the hither, but beyond the farther bounds of Romanticism, an unexplored land, a sort of grim, rough Kamschatka, and it was on its outermost point that, as Sainte-Beuve, who understood his worth, says, he built himself a kiosk, or yourta, rather, of strange architectural design.

Several of the poems that appear in "The Flowers of Evil" were already written. Like all born poets,

Baudelaire possessed at the very outset a manner proper to himself and had mastered a style of his own, which he made stronger and more polished later on, but without altering it. He has often been accused of having been purposely odd, of having determined to be original at any cost, and especially of being *mannered*. Before going farther it will be well to discuss this point.

There are people who are naturally mannered, in whom simplicity would be nothing else than downright affectation, a species of inverted mannerism. They would have to strive long and work hard in order to be simple. The circumvolutions of their brains are such that ideas, instead of keeping to a straight line, twist, tangle, and curl. It is the most complex, the most subtile, the most intense thoughts that first and foremost occur to them; they behold things from a peculiar point of view that alters both their appearance and the perspective. It is the strangest, the most unusual images, the most absurdly removed from the subject treated of, that chiefly strike them, and which they manage to connect with their woof and warp by mysterious threads that are at once perceived. That was the nature of Baudelaire's mind, and what critics took for work, effort, exaggeration, and paroxysms of delib-

erate purpose, was in reality the free and ready blossoming out of his individuality. His poems, with their exquisitely strange savour, enclosed within vials so marvellously chased, cost him no more trouble than badly rimed commonplaces cost other men.

Though Baudelaire professed for the great masters of the past the admiration they historically deserve, he believed they ought not to be taken for models. They had been fortunate enough to be born when the world was young, in the dawn of humanity, so to speak, when as yet nothing had been expressed, and every form, every image, every feeling still had the bloom of novelty. The great commonplaces that form the main stock of human thought were then in their first flush, and sufficed for simple geniuses addressing a people yet childish. But by dint of being repeated, these general poetic themes had become worn, like coins that have been too long in circulation and have lost their sharpness of outline; besides, life has become more complex, contains more notions and ideas, and is no longer sufficiently reproduced in artificial compositions inspired by the spirit of another age. While true innocence is charming, perversity that affects to be innocent is annoying and detestable. Now the nineteenth cen-

tury is anything but artless, and it needs, in order to express its thoughts, its dreams, and its aspirations, an idiom more complex than the so-called classic tongue. Literature, like day, has its morn, noon, eve, and night. Disregarding all vain discussions as to whether dawn is to be preferred to twilight, the poet's business is to paint the actual time of day and to use a palette provided with the colours necessary to render the hues of the hour. For has not sunset its beauty like the dawn? Are not copper reds, golden greens, turquoise tones melting into sapphire, the hues that blaze and melt into the final great conflagration, the strange, monstrous shaped clouds interpenetrated by the flash of light, that look like the ruins of a mighty aerial Babel, are not these as poetic in themselves as rosy-fingered Dawn, which, natheless, we value highly? But the Hours that precede the car of Day, on Guido Reni's ceiling, have long ago flown away.

The author of "The Flowers of Evil" loved what is inaccurately called the decadent style, which is simply art that has reached the extreme point of maturity which marks the setting of ancient civilisations. It is an ingenious, complex, learned style, full of shades and refinements of meaning, ever extending the bounds of

language, borrowing from every technical vocabulary, taking colours from every palette and notes from every keyboard; a style that endeavours to express the most inexpressible thoughts, the vaguest and most fleeting contours of form, that listens, with a view to rendering them, to the subtile confidences of neurosity, to the confessions of aging lust turning into depravity, and to the odd hallucinations of fixed ideas passing into mania. This decadent style is the final expression of the Word which is called upon to express everything, and which is worked for all it is worth. In connection with this style may be recalled the speech of the Lower Empire, that was already veined with the greenish streaking of decomposition, and the complex refinement of the Byzantine school, the ultimate form of decadent Greek art. Such, however, is the necessary, the inevitable speech of nations and civilisations when fictitious life has taken the place of natural life and developed in man wants till then unknown. It is no easy matter to write in this style, despised though it be by pedants, for it expresses novel ideas in novel forms and uses words hitherto unheard. Contrary to the classic style, it admits of the introduction of shadows, in which move confusedly the larvæ of superstition, the haggard phan-

tasms of insomnia, the terrors of night, the monstrous dreams that impotence alone stays in their realisation, the gloomy fancies at which day would stand aghast, and all that the soul has of darkest, most misshapen, and undefinably horrible in the depths of its uttermost recess.

It will be readily understood that the fourteen hundred words in Racine's vocabulary are not sufficient for an author who has undertaken to reproduce modern ideas and things in their infinite complexity and varied colouring. So Baudelaire, who was a good Latin scholar, in spite of his lack of success at his degree examinations, assuredly preferred Apuleius, Petronius, Juvenal, St. Augustine, and Tertullian, with his ebony black style, to Vergil and Cicero. He even resorted to ecclesiastical Latin, to the prose and the hymns in which rime stands for the forgotten ancient rhythm, and under the title "Franciscæ meæ Laudes," addressed "to a modest and erudite milliner," — for thus runs the dedication,— a Latin poem rimed in the ternary form, as Brizeux calls it, which is composed of three rimes following consecutively, instead of being alternated as in the Dantesque terzetta. To this curious poem is added a no less curious note, which I transcribe, for it explains and

corroborates what I have just said about the idioms of decadence : —

" Does it not strike the reader, as it strikes me, that the tongue of the latest Latin decadence — the parting sigh of a robust being already transformed and prepared for spiritual life — is singularly well fitted to express passion in the way it has been understood and felt by the modern world ? Mysticity is the other pole of the magnet of which Catullus and his followers, brutal poets who were superficial merely, knew only the sensual pole. The solecisms and barbarisms of that marvellous tongue seem to me to render the carelessness of a passion that forgets all restraint and mocks at regulations. The words, taken in a new sense, reveal the charming unskilfulness of the Northern barbarian kneeling before his Roman beauty. Have not even the puns, as they flash among the pedantic stammering, a look of childhood's shy, quaint grace ? "

It would not do to carry the notion too far. When Baudelaire is not engaged in expressing a yet untold side of the soul or of things, he makes use of so pure, clear, correct, and accurate a tongue that the most critical can find nothing in it to blame. This is particularly noticeable in his prose, in which he treats of matters

more generally current and less abstruse than in his verse, which is almost always extremely condensed. His philosophic and literary beliefs were the beliefs held by Edgar Allan Poe, whose works he had not yet translated, but for whom he felt singular affinity. The remarks he wrote upon the American author, in the preface to the "Tales of Mystery, Imagination, and Humour," are equally applicable to himself: —

"He looked upon progress, the great modern idea, as no better than a trap to catch fools, and he called *improvements* in human dwellings rectangular cicatrices and abominations. He believed in the unchanging alone, in the eternal, in the self-same, and he enjoyed the cruel privilege of possessing, in a society in love with itself, that Machiavellian common-sense which goes before the wise man through the desert of history like a pillar of light."

Baudelaire abhorred philanthropists, progressists, utilitarians, humanitarians, utopists, and all those who seek to make any change in unchanging nature and in the inevitable order of society. He sought neither the suppression of hell nor that of the guillotine in the interest of sinners and assassins. He did not believe that man was born good, and he admitted original sin as an

element that is ever to be found in the depths of the purest souls, sin, that is an evil counsellor urging man to do what is harmful to him, precisely because it is deadly to him and for the sole pleasure of running counter to law, without any other inducement than disobedience, apart from any sensuality, any profit, any charm. He marked and upbraided this perverse disposition in others just as he marked and upbraided it in himself, like a slave caught in wrong-doing; but he refrained from preaching on the subject, for he considered it damnably irremediable. The short-sighted critics who have accused Baudelaire of immorality — a convenient text for abuse on the part of jealous mediocrity, for it is always well received by Pharisees — are entirely in the wrong. No man ever professed haughtier disgust for turpitude of mind and the repulsiveness of matter. He hated evil as being a deviation from the mathematical and the normal; and, like the thorough gentleman he was, he despised it as improper, ridiculous, commonplace, and particularly as being filthy. He has often been led to treat hideous, repugnant, diseased subjects by that sort of horror and fascination that leads a bird under the spell of magnetism to flutter down to the serpent's evil mouth, but many a time, by a vigorous upward flight he breaks the

spell and soars upward again towards the bluest realms of spirituality. He might have engraved as a motto on his seal the two words, "Spleen and Idealism," which form the title of the first part of his volume of verse. If it be urged that his bouquet is composed of strange, metallic-leaved flowers, with intoxicating perfumes, their calyxes filled with bitter tears or aqua-tofana instead of dew, his answer is that scarce any others grow in the black loam, saturated with rottenness like the soil of a graveyard, which is formed by the decrepit civilisations, in which the corpses of former ages are dissolving amid mephitic miasmata. No doubt forget-me-nots, roses, daisies, and violets are sweeter and more spring-like flowers, but they are not to be found growing in the black mud that fills in the interstices between the paving-stones in the great cities. Besides, Baudelaire, though he does appreciate the great tropical landscapes in which strangely elegant and gigantic bursts of trees suddenly bloom out dream-like, cares but little for the quieter pastoral glimpses of woodland in the vicinity of the city, and he would be the last to go into ecstasies, like Heinrich Heine's Philistines, in presence of the romantic efflorescence of the new leafage, or to be transported by the twittering of the sparrows. What he likes is to

follow man, wan, overstrung, writhing, tortured by the fictitious passions and the genuine weariness of modern days, through the sinuosities of the vast madrepore that is Paris; to watch him in his troubles, his anguish, his wretchedness, his prostration, his excitement, his nervousness, and his despair. He gazes at the nascent evil instincts, the foul habits idly crouching in their filth, as one might gaze upon knotted vipers turned up from under a dunghill. The sight, which both attracts and repels him, fills him with incurable melancholy, for he does not consider that he is any better than other men, and it pains him to see the pure vault of heaven and the chaste stars veiled by loathsome vapours.

Holding such opinions, Baudelaire, it will readily be perceived, believed art should be absolutely autonomous, and refused to admit that poetry had any end other than itself, or any mission to fulfil other than that of exciting in the reader's mind the sensation of the Beautiful, in the strictest meaning of the word. In our day, when men are anything but simple-minded, he believed it was necessary to add to that sensation a certain effect of surprise, of astonishment, of uncommonness. He banished from poetry, to the utmost of his power, eloquence, passion, and the too accurate

reproduction of truth. Just as one must not use in sculpture parts cast directly from the living model, so he insisted that before being admitted into the sphere of art every object should undergo a metamorphosis that should fit it for that subtle realm, by idealising it and removing it from trivial truth.

These principles may surprise one, when reading certain poems of his in which he seems to have deliberately set out to be horrible; but if they be carefully examined, it will be seen that the horrible is always transformed by the character and the effect of it, by a Rembrandt-like flash, by a grand stroke, like that of Velasquez, that reveals the high breeding under the foul difformity. As he mingles in his caldron all manner of fantastically strange and cabalistically venomous ingredients, Baudelaire may say, like the witches in Macbeth, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." Predetermined ugliness of this kind, therefore, is not in contradiction with the supreme aim of art, and poems such as "The Seven Old Men" and "The Little Old Women" drew from the poetic Saint John who is dreaming in the Patmos of Guernsey a remark which admirably describes the author of "The Flowers of Evil": "You have endowed the heavens of

art with a ghastly beam; you have created a new shudder." But the ardently ruddy or the coldly blue shadow that helps Baudelaire to bring out the essential, luminous touch is but the shadow of his talent, if one may thus put it. Though that talent is apparently nervous, feverish, and restless, it is really serene. He is at peace on the high summits: *pacem summa tenent.*

All the same, instead of saying what are the poet's beliefs, it would be simpler to let him speak for himself: —

"If a man will only take the trouble to examine himself, to question his own soul, to recall his childhood remembrances, he will perceive that poetry has no other end than itself; it cannot have any other, and no poem can be so great, so noble, so truly worthy of being called a poem, as that which has been written solely for the pleasure of writing a poem.

"I do not mean to imply that poetry does not ennoble manners, — I desire to be correctly understood, — or that its final result is not the elevation of man above sordid interests; that would plainly be absurd. What I say is that if the poet has sought to attain a moral end, he has lessened his poetic force, and it is not imprudent to wager that his work will be poor.

Poetry cannot assimilate itself to science or morals, under pain of death or forfeiture. Itself, not truth, is its end. The modes of demonstrating truth are different, and are to be sought for elsewhere. Truth has nothing to do with songs: the very causes that tend to make a song charming, graceful, and irresistible, would deprive truth of its authority and power. Cold, calm, and impassible, the demonstrative temper repels the gems and flowers of the Muse, and is therefore absolutely the opposite of the poetic temper.

"Pure intelligence aims at truth, taste shows us beauty, and moral sense teaches us duty. It is true that the middle one of these senses is intimately connected with the two extreme ones, and that it is distinguished from the moral sense by so slight a difference that Aristotle did not hesitate to class some of its delicate workings among the virtues. That is why what especially exasperates a man of taste when he beholds vice is the difformity, the disproportion of it. Vice is harmful to the just and the true, revolting to the intellect and the conscience. On the other hand as an outrage against harmony, as a dissonance, it hurts more specially certain poetic minds, and I do not think it is scandalous to look

upon every infraction of morality, of moral beauty, as a sort of sin against universal prosody and rhythm.

"It is this admirable, this immortal instinct for the beautiful that leads us to look upon the earth and the sights it offers us as a sort of summary of, as something corresponding to, heaven. The insatiable desire for all that is beyond and concealed by life is the most living proof of our immortality. It is at once by poetry and *through* poetry, by music and *through* music, that the soul obtains a glimpse of the splendours that lie beyond the tomb. And when an exquisite poem brings tears to our eyes, these tears do not mean excess of enjoyment; rather do they testify to irritation of melancholy, to postulation of the nerves, to the existence of a nature exiled within the imperfect, that seeks to seize at once, and even while upon this earth, upon the paradise that has been revealed to it.

"Thus, the principle of poetry is strictly and simply human aspiration to a higher beauty, and the principle manifests itself in enthusiasm, in rapture of the soul, — an enthusiasm which is wholly independent of passion, the intoxication of the heart, and of truth, the food of reason. For passion is a *natural*

thing, too natural indeed not to introduce an unpleasant, a discordant tone into the domain of pure beauty; too familiar and too violent not to scandalise the pure desires, the gracious melancholy, and the noble despair that inhabit the supernatural regions of poetry."

Although few poets have been endowed with more spontaneous originality and inspiration, Baudelaire, no doubt through disgust at the sham lyricism that pretends to believe that a tongue of fire settles upon the head of the writer who is striving hard to rime a stanza, maintained that a true writer called up, directed and modified at will the mysterious power of literary production; and I find in a very curious passage prefixed to the translation of Edgar Allan Poe's famous poem "The Raven," the following semi-ironical, semi-serious lines, in which Baudelaire formulates his own views while appearing to be simply analysing those of the American author: —

"We are told that poetics are made and modelled after poems. Here is a poet who affirms that his poem has been composed in accordance with his poetics. He certainly was possessed of greater genius and inspiration than any other man, if inspiration be taken to mean energy, intellectual enthusiasm, and the power of main-

taining one's faculties bright. But he was also fonder of work than any other man, and though a thorough eccentric, was given to repeating that originality is a thing to be learned by serving an apprenticeship to it, which does not mean that it is a thing which can be transmitted by teaching. His two great foes were chance and the incomprehensible. Did he claim to be, through strange and amusing vanity, less original than he naturally was? Did he undervalue the natural gift that was in him on purpose to make the share of the will larger? I am rather inclined to believe he did, although it must not be forgotten that ardent and swift as was his genius, he was passionately fond of analysis, combinations, and calculations. Another of his favourite axioms was that everything in a poem, as in a novel, in a sonnet, as in a tale, ought to work for the end. 'A good author is already thinking of his last line as he is penning his first.' Thanks to this admirable method, an author can begin his work at the end and go on with it when he pleases and in whatever part he pleases. The amateurs of *a fine frenzy* may perhaps revolt at such *cynical* maxims, but no one need take more than he likes. It will always be useful to show them the benefit art may derive from deliberation, and men of the world the amount of labour

required to produce that piece of luxury called poetry. After all, a little charlatanism is always allowable in genius, and indeed is not unbecoming to it. Like rouge upon the cheeks of a naturally beautiful woman, it is an additional seasoning to the mind."

The latter sentence is characteristic of the poet and reveals his peculiar love of the *artificial*. Nor did he attempt to conceal his preference; he took pleasure in the kind of composite, and at times somewhat fictitious beauty wrought out by very old or very corrupt civilisations. To illustrate this by a readily apprehended comparison, I shall say that he would have preferred to a maiden who used no other cosmetic than the water in her basin, a more mature woman who availed herself of all the resources of skilled coquetry, sitting in front of a dressing-table covered with bottles of scent, cosmetics, ivory-backed brushes, and steel pincers. The penetrating perfume of a skin steeped in aromatics, like Esther's, who was purified for six months with myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, before being presented to King Ahasuerus, exercised an intoxicating influence upon him. He by no means disliked a touch of china rose or hortensia rouge upon a blooming cheek, patches alluringly placed at the corner of the mouth or the eye, eyelids

darkened with kohl, hair dyed red and dusted with gold, a bloom of rice-powder upon the shoulders and bosom, lips and finger-tips touched up with carmine. He liked these artistic improvements upon nature, clever ways of setting off charms, piquant allurements laid on with a skilful hand to increase the grace, attraction, and character of a face. He certainly would never have written virtuous tirades against crinolines and the making-up of faces; whatever separated man, and especially woman, from the state of nature, he looked upon as a fortunate invention. So unprimitive a taste explains itself and is easily understood in a poet of the *decadence* who has written "The Flowers of Evil." Nor will any of my readers be surprised when I add that he preferred to the simple scent of the rose and the violet, benzoin, amber, and even musk, so little thought of nowadays, as well as the penetrating perfume of certain exotic flowers the heady scent of which is unsuited to our temperate climes. As regards odours, Baudelaire was endowed with a strangely subtle sensuality not often met with save among Eastern nations. He took deep delight in going through the whole series of them, and he could with reason say of himself, in the words quoted by Banville which I have reproduced when drawing the poet's portrait at the

beginning of this article: "My soul is borne fluttering on scents as other men's souls are borne fluttering on music."

He was fond also of oddly elegant, capriciously rich, insolently fanciful dresses that partook at once of the actress and the courtesan, although he himself was always rigidly correct in his dress; such excessive, out of the way, anti-natural taste, almost invariably contrary to the classical standard of beauty, was to him a token that the human will had corrected in its own fashion the forms and colours furnished by matter. He beheld a proof of grandeur where a philosopher found only a text for remonstrance. *Depravity*, that is, a breaking away from the normal type, is impossible to animals, who are helplessly directed by unchanging instinct. For the same reason, *inspired* poets, who are not conscious of their work, and cannot direct it, filled him with a species of aversion, and he desired to introduce art and work even into originality.

I am putting a good deal of metaphysics into this introduction, but then Baudelaire's nature was more subtle, complex, logical, paradoxical, and philosophical than that of poets in general. The æsthetics of his art preoccupied him greatly; he had a wealth of systems which

he endeavoured to apply, and he planned out whatever he did. In his belief, literature should be *predetermined*, and the share of the *accidental* restricted as much as possible. This did not prevent his turning to account, like the true poet he was, the fortunate chances that occur in the course of the work, and the unforeseen beauties that arise from the very subject itself, like flowerets haply mingled with the seed the sower has chosen. Every artist is more or less like Lope de Vega, who, when he set about composing his plays, locked up the rules with six keys — *con seis claves*. When carried away by the work, he forgot, consciously or unconsciously, his systems and paradoxes.

Baudelaire's reputation, which, for some years, had not extended beyond the small conclave which every budding genius draws to itself, burst out suddenly when he presented himself to the public with the nosegay of "The Flowers of Evil" in his hand; a nosegay that in no respect resembled the innocent poetic sheaves of aspirants. The attention of the law was aroused, and a number of poems so learnedly, so abstrusely immoral, so shrouded in veils and forms of art that they required, to be understood by readers, a very high degree of literary culture, had to be withdrawn from the volume

and replaced by others less dangerously eccentric. Usually books of poems do not attract much attention; they are brought out, vegetate, and die in silence, for two or three poets at most suffice for our intellectual food. But light and talk burst out at once upon Baudelaire, and when the scandal passed away it was seen that he had produced that very rare thing, an original piece of work possessing a savour all its own. No writer, especially no poet, can ask for greater good-fortune than to impart to taste a hitherto unknown sensation.

"The Flowers of Evil" was a happy title, and happy titles are far more difficult to hit upon than is believed. It summed up in brief, poetic fashion the general idea of the book and indicated its tendency. Although quite plainly Romanticist in its intention and its execution, Baudelaire cannot be connected by any very visible bond with any one of the great masters of the school. His verse, with its refined and erudite structure, its occasionally too great conciseness, clothing objects as with a suit of armour rather than with a garment, appears at the first reading to be difficult and obscure. This is due not to any fault on the part of the author, but to the very novelty of the topics he

treats of, which had not before been rendered by literary means. In order to succeed in doing so, the poet was compelled to compose a speech, a rhythm, and a palette for himself. He could not, however, prevent the reader feeling a shock of surprise when perusing verse so different from all that had until then appeared. In order to paint the corruption which he abhors, he managed to find the morbidly rich hues of more or less advanced decomposition, pearly, shelly tones such as shimmer on stagnant waters, the bloom of consumption, the ghastly whiteness of anæmia, the gall yellow of overflowing bile, the leaden grays of plague mists, poisonous, metallic greens that stink of arseniate of copper, sooty blacks washed by the rain down plastered walls, bitumens baked and browned in the frying-pans of hell and so admirably adapted to form a background to livid, spectral heads, in a word, a whole scale of exacerbated colours carried out to the most intense pitch, that correspond to autumn, to sunset, to the extreme maturity of fruits, to the dying hour of civilisations.

The volume opens with a poem addressed "To the Reader," whom the poet, contrary to custom, does not attempt to win over, but to whom he speaks the harshest of truths, accusing him, in spite of his hypocrisy, of

having all the vices he blames in other men, and of bearing in his heart the great modern monster, Weariness, which with bourgeois cowardice, idiotically dreams of Roman ferocity and debauchery, like the bureaucratic Nero, the shop-keeping Heliogabalus it is. Another poem, of the greatest beauty, entitled, no doubt with ironical antithesis, "Benediction," depicts the coming into the world of the poet, who is an object of aversion to his mother, ashamed of the fruit of her womb, and his persecution by stupidity, envy, and sarcasm, his falling a prey to a Delilah, who rejoices at handing him over to the Philistines naked, disarmed, shaven, after having exhausted in his favour all the refinements of ferocious coquetry, and at last, after insult, wretchedness, and torture, and having been tried in the crucible of suffering, winning eternal glory, and the crown of light destined to martyrs, whether it be for the truth or for beauty that they have died.

A short poem, entitled "Sunshine," follows this one, and contains a sort of tacit justification of the poet's mad wanderings. A bright beam of sunshine lights up the foul city; the author has gone forth and traverses, "like a poet catching verses by calling to them as to birds," to use Mathurin Regnier's picturesque expres-

sion, loathsome squares, lanes in which the closed blinds of the windows conceal yet betray hidden lusts, the black, damp, filthy maze of blank-walled, leprous houses at some window of which, here and there, the light shines upon a pot of flowers or a girl's head. For is not the poet like sunshine that goes in by itself wherever it pleases, into hospitals and into palaces, into hovels and into churches, ever pure, ever brilliant, ever divine, illumining with its golden light the dead body and the rose indifferently?

In "Elevation" we see the poet soaring in the very vault of heaven, beyond the starry spheres, in the luminous ether, on the very confines of our universe which has vanished like a cloudlet in the depths of the infinite, drinking in deeply the healthy rarefied air free from the foul odours of earth and perfumed by the breath of angels. For it must not be forgotten that Baudelaire, though he has often been accused of materialism — a reproach fools never fail to address to men of talent — is on the contrary endowed to an eminent degree with the gift of *spirituality*, as Swedenborg would say. He also possesses the gift of *correspondence*, if I may still use these mystical terms; that is, he is able to discover through a secret intuition relations invisible

to other people, and thus to connect by unexpected analogies, which a *seer* alone can note, objects apparently utterly removed from and most opposed to each other. Every true poet is endowed with this quality to a greater or less degree, for it is the very essence of his art.

No doubt, in this book devoted to the representation of modern depravity and perversity, Baudelaire has placed repugnant pictures, in which vice laid bare wallows in all the hideousness of its shame; but the poet, filled with utter disgust, with indignant contempt, and with a return to the ideal that is often lacking in satirists, stigmatises and brands with a red-hot iron the unhealthy flesh, plastered over with unguents and powder. Nowhere does the thirst for pure, untainted air, for immaculate whiteness, for spotless azure, for inaccessible light manifest itself more ardently than in those poems which have been charged with immorality; as if the flagellation of vice and vice itself were one and the same thing, or a man were a poisoner because he had described the toxic pharmaceutics of the Borgias. The method is not a new one, but it never fails to succeed, and there are people who affect to believe that when reading "The Flowers of Evil" one must neces-

sarily wear a glass mask, such as that worn by Exili when engaged in the compounding of his famous inheritance powder. I have read Baudelaire's poems very often, but I have never yet been struck dead by them, nor have my features been convulsed, and my body covered with black spots, as if I had supped with La Vanozza in one of the Pope's vineyards. All that sort of nonsense, which is unfortunately harmful, for all fools enthusiastically believe it, make an artist worthy of the name shrug his shoulders with surprise when he is told that blue is moral and scarlet indecent. It is very much as if one were to say that the potato is virtuous and henbane criminal.

In a delightful poem on perfumes these are divided into classes that awaken diverse ideas, sensations, and remembrances. Some are as cool as a child's flesh, green as the meads in spring, recalling the rosy hues of early morn, and laden with innocent thoughts. Others, like musk, benzoin, amber, nard, and incense, are proud, triumphal, worldly, and incline to coquetry, love, luxury, banquets, and splendour. Transposed into the realm of colour, they would represent purple and gold.

The poet often recurs to this idea of the meaning of perfumes. By the side of a dusky beauty, a Cape

maiden or an Indian bayadere astray in Paris, who seems to have been charged to lull his splenetic nostalgia, he speaks of the mingled scent of "musk and havana" that bears away his soul to the shores beloved of the sun, where the palm leaves spread fan-like in the warm blue air, and the masts of ships swing to the harmonious roll of the sea, while the silent slaves endeavour to rouse their young master from his languid melancholy. Farther on, wondering what will become of his work, he compares it to an old flagon, corked up, forgotten among the cobwebs, at the back of some press, in a deserted house. From the open press issue with the odour of the past the faint scents of dresses, laces, and powder-boxes that bring up remembrances of vanished loves and departed elegance. If by chance the viscous, rancid flagon be uncorked, there arises from it a bitter perfume of sal ammoniac and Marseilles vinegar, the powerful antidote to modern pestilence. This haunting sense of aromas reappears in many a place, shrouding beings and things in a tenuous cloud. I know not many poets who seek to obtain the same effect; they are generally content to introduce light, colour, and music into their verse, but they seldom let fall into it the one drop of delicate essence with which

Baudelaire's muse never fails to moisten the sponge in her scent-bottle or the cambric of her handkerchief.

As I am on the subject of the poet's private tastes and little hobbies, let me add that he adored cats, which, like himself, are very fond of perfumes and in whom the odour of valerian induces a sort of epileptic ecstasy. He was very fond of these delightful, quiet, mysterious, gentle animals, with their electric shivers, whose favourite attitude is the prone pose of the sphinxes, which seem to have passed their secrets on to them. They prowl with velvet paw through the house, like the *genius loci*, or come to sit down on the table by the writer, keeping his thought company, and gazing at him out of the depths of their eyes, dusted with gold, with intelligent tenderness and magical penetration. It seems as though cats divine the thought that is passing from the brain to the pen, and that as they stretch out a paw they are trying to seize it on its way. They delight in silence, orderliness, and peace, and no place suits them so well as a literary man's study. They wait with wondrous patience until his task be done, while they accompany his labour with their guttural, rhythmic purring. Now and then they smooth with their tongue some ruffled spot on their

fur, for they are cleanly, careful of themselves, coquettish, and cannot bear anything amiss with their appearance, but they do all this in a calm, discreet way, as if afraid of disturbing or being in the way. Their caresses are tender, delicate, silent, *feminine*, and have nothing in common with the noisy, boisterous petulance of dogs, on whom, nevertheless, the masses have bestowed all their sympathy.

These many merits were duly appreciated by Baudelaire, as was right and proper, and he more than once dedicated to cats beautiful poems — there are three in "The Flowers of Evil" — in which he sings of their moral and physical qualities, and he very often brings them in as characteristic accessories in his compositions. Cats are as numerous in Baudelaire's verse as dogs are in Paolo Veronese's paintings, and are equivalent to a signature. I ought to add that there is to these pretty creatures, so well behaved during the daytime, a nocturnal side, mysterious and cabalistic which had much attraction for the poet. A cat, with its phosphorescent eyes that stand it in the stead of lanterns, and sparks flashing from its back, moves fearlessly through the darkness, where it meets wandering ghosts, witches, alchemists, necromancers, resur-

rectionists, lovers, thieves, murderers, gray-coated patrols, and all the obscure larvæ that emerge and work by night only. It seems to know more than the latest special from the sabbath, and does not hesitate to rub up against Mephistopheles' lame leg. Its serenades under the balconies of the females of its kind, its amours on the roof to the accompaniment of yells like those of a child being murdered, impart to it a passably devilish look that, up to a certain point, justifies the repugnance felt for it by practical, daylight minds, for whom the mysteries of Erebus have no attraction. But a Doctor Faust will always love to have a cat for a companion in his study filled with tomes and alchemic apparatus. Baudelaire himself was a voluptuous, wheedling cat, with velvety manners, mysterious gait, strong and supple, casting on men and things a glance filled with a troublous, free insistent light, difficult to retain, but wholly free from perfidiousness, and faithfully attached to those to whom he had once given his independent sympathy.

Diverse female figures show in Baudelaire's poems, some veiled, others semi-nude, but to none can a name be given. They are types rather than persons; they represent the *eternal woman*, and the love the poet

expresses for them is *abstract love*, and not *concrete love*, for we have seen that his theory did not admit individual passion, which he looked upon as too crude, familiar, and violent. Among these women, some are symbolical of unconscious and almost bestial prostitution, with faces heavy with rouge and powder, eyes lined thick with kohl, lips painted red and resembling bleeding wounds, helmets of false hair, and gems that glitter hard and cold. Others, more coldly, cleverly, perversely corrupt, Marchionesses de Marteuil living in the nineteenth century, transpose vice from the body to the soul. They are haughty, icy proud, bitter, and find pleasure only in satisfied wickedness, insatiable as sterility itself, gloomy as weariness, filled with hysterical, mad fancies, and lacking, like the Fiend himself, the power to love. Endowed with terrific, almost spectral beauty, which is not flushed with the red glow of life, they go on to their appointed end, pale, unfeeling, superbly disgusted, trampling upon hearts that they crush with their narrow high heels. It is when he comes away from such loves, that are like hatreds, from such pleasures that are more deadly than combats, that the poet turns again to his dusky idol with the exotic odour, with the wildly quaint adornments, supple and wheedling like the black panther

of Java, who rests him and compensates to him for the harm done him by these wicked sharp-clawed Parisian cats, that have toyed with his heart as with a mouse.

But it is upon none of these plaster, marble, or ebony creatures that he bestows his soul. Above the darksome mass of leprous houses, above the foul labyrinth where meander the spectres of pleasure, above the foul swarming wretchedness, ugliness, and perversity, far, far away up in the unchanging heavens floats the beloved phantom of his Beatrice, the ideal ever sought, never attained; highest, divine beauty incarnated in the form of a woman, etherealised, spiritualised, made of light, flame, and perfume; a vapour, a dream, a reflection of the aromatical, seraphic world, like Edgar Allan Poe's Ligeias, Morellas, Unas, and Eleonoras, and that amazing creation, Balzac's Séraphita-Séraphitus. Out of the depths of his falls, his errors and his despair, it is to this celestial image that he holds out his hands as to Our Lady of Succour, with cries, tears, and utter self-contempt. In hours of amorous melancholy, it is with her he fain would flee and hide his perfect felicity in some nook, mysteriously fairy-like or ideally comfortable, — a Gainsborough cottage, an interior of Gerard

Dow's, or, better still, a fretted marble palace in Benares or Hyderabad. He never has any other companion in his dreams. Are we to see in this Beatrice, this Laura, never named, a real maiden or young married woman who, while she remained on this earth, was passionately and religiously loved by the poet? It would be a romantic supposition, but it was not my fortune to be admitted sufficiently into his heart's inner life to be in a position to answer the question. In the course of his purely metaphysical conversations, Baudelaire spoke much of his ideas, very little of his feelings, and never of his actions. And as regarded his loves, he had sealed his delicate, disdainful lips with a cameo bearing the image of Harpocrates. It would be safest to consider that ideal love as merely an uplifting of the soul, the striving of an unsatisfied heart, the ever recurring longing of the imperfect that aspires to the absolute.

At the end of "The Flowers of Evil" come a number of poems on "Wine" and the different forms of intoxication it produces, according to the kind of brain on which it acts. It is unnecessary to say that these are not bacchanalian songs in which the fruit of the vine is honoured, or anything resembling them. They are terrible and hideous descriptions of drunkenness,

but unprovided with a Hogarthian moral. The painting needs no inscription, and one shudders at "The Workingman's Drink." "The Litanies of Satan," the god of evil and the prince of this world, are a cold piece of irony of the kind the poet indulges in, and which it would be a mistake to consider impious. Impiety did not form part of Baudelaire's nature, for he believed in a higher law established by God from all time, the least violation of which is punished in the severest way, not in this world only, but also in the next. It is certainly without taking any pleasure in the task that he has depicted vice and exhibited Satan and all his pomp. He is even rather troubled by the devil as the tempter, and sees him at work everywhere, as if man's native perversity were not sufficient to drive him to sin, infamy, and crime. Sin, with Baudelaire, is invariably followed by remorse, anguish, and disgust, and entails its own self-punishment, which is the worst punishment of all. But enough on this point; it is criticism, and not theology with which I have to do.

I must draw attention to some of the most remarkable poems in "The Flowers of Evil," especially the one called "Don Juan in Hades." It is a tragically grand picture, painted with a sober masterliness of

colouring upon the sombre flaming background of the infernal regions.

The boat of the dead glides over the black waters, bearing Don Juan and his train of outraged women and insulted men. The beggar whom he sought to have deny the existence of God, an athletic vagrant, as proud in his rags as any Antisthenes, handles the oars in the room of Charon. In the stern a man of stone, a wan phantom, with stiff, sculptural gesture, holds the tiller; old Don Luis points to his white hair scorned by his hypocritically impious son; Sganarelle claims payment of his wages from his master, now for ever insolvent. Doña Elvira endeavours to bring back the lover's smile to the lips of the disdainful husband, and the pallid women who have loved him, outraged, abandoned, betrayed, trampled under foot like withered blooms, unveil the ever bleeding wound in their hearts. Amid the concert of tears, wailings, and curses, Don Juan remains impassible; he has done what he willed to do; Heaven, hell, and the world may think of him what they please, his pride knows not remorse; lightning may blast him, but it cannot force him to repent.

The serene melancholy, the luminous peace, and the slumbrousness of the poem entitled "The Former

Life," form a pleasant contrast to the sombre descriptions of monstrous modern Paris, and testify to the fact that by the side of the blacks, bitumens, browns, umbers, and siennas on the artist's palette, there is a whole range of cool, light, transparent, delicately rosy, ideally blue hues like those in the distances in Paradise Breughel's pictures, which are fitted to reproduce Elysian landscapes and the mirages of dreams.

The feeling for the *artificial* should be mentioned as characteristic of the poet. By this must be understood a creation due wholly to art and whence nature is excluded. In an article which I wrote while Baudelaire was alive, I drew attention to this curious tendency, of which the poem called "A Parisian Dream" is a striking instance. I quote the passage in which I endeavoured to reproduce that splendid, sombre nightmare, worthy of Martin's mezzotints: "Imagine a landscape outside the realm of nature, or, rather, a prospect composed of metal, marble, and water, and from which vegetation is banished as out of place. Everything is rigid, burnished, glaring under a sunless, moonless, starless sky. From amid the eternal silence rise, illumined by their own light, palaces, colonnades, towers, stairs, fountains, whence ponderous cascades

fall like crystal curtains. The blue waters are set, like steel mirrors of antiquity, within quays and basins of burnished gold, or flow noiselessly under bridges of gems. The flow is clasped by the crystallised ray, and the porphyry flagstones of the terraces reflect objects as if they were mirrors. Were the Queen of Sheba to tread them, she would lift up her gown for fear of wetting her feet, so shiny is the surface. The style of this poem gleams like polished black marble."

Is it not strangely fanciful, this composition made up of rigid elements among which nothing lives, breathes, or moves, in which no blade of grass, no leaf, no flower, breaks the implacable symmetry of fictitious forms invented by art? Does not one seem to be in an untouched Palmyra or Palenque which has remained intact and erect in some dead planet from which the atmosphere has vanished?

Unquestionably such fancies are fantastic, anti-natural, bordering on hallucination, and they betray a secret desire for impossible novelty, but for my part I prefer them to the sickly simplicity of so-called poems that embroider with old faded wools upon the canvas of worn-out commonplaces, trite, trivial, and idiotically sentimental patterns; wreaths of big roses, cabbage-

green foliage, and doves billing and cooing. I am quite ready at times to have what is rare at the cost of its being shocking, fantastic, and exaggerated. Barbarism is superior to platitude, to my thinking, and Baudelaire has this advantage, so far as I am concerned: he may be bad, but he is never vulgar; his faults are as original as his qualities, and even when he is unpleasant, it is because he has willed to be so, in accordance with long matured æsthetics and reasoning.

I must bring to a close this already somewhat lengthy analysis, though I have cut it down a good deal, with a few words on the poem entitled "The Little Old Women," which startled Victor Hugo. As the poet walks the Paris streets, he sees little old women pass by with humble and dejected mien, and he follows them just as if they were lovely women, reading, in the old, worn, faded shawl, rubbed, darned over and over again, meanly covering the thin shoulders, in the bit of yellowed, frumped lace, in the ring, — a souvenir which the pawn-shop must not have, and which is ready to slip off the slender finger of the wan hand, — a whole past of happiness and luxury, of love and devotion, it may be, a remnant of beauty still perceptible under the wretchedness of poverty and the devastation

of age. He breathes new life into these tottering spectres, straightens them up, puts the flesh of youth upon their gaunt skeletons, and reawakens within their poor unhappy hearts the illusions of bygone days. Most ridiculous, yet most touching are these graveyard Venuses and almshouse Ninon de Lenclos as they sadly flit by, at the master's command, like spectres surprised by the dawn.

Baudelaire rightly considered that metre, disdained by all who lack feeling for form, — and there are plenty such nowadays, — is most important. It is the commonest thing in the world, at the present time, to assume that what is poetical is poetry. The two have nothing in common. Fénelon, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, George Sand are poetical, but they are not poets; that is to say, they are incapable of writing verse, even mediocre verse, a special gift possessed by people greatly inferior in merit to these illustrious masters. To attempt to separate verse from poetry is a modern piece of folly that tends to nothing less than the destruction of art itself. I find in an excellent article on Taine, by Sainte-Beuve, in connection with Pope and Boileau, who are rather scornfully spoken of by the author of

the "History of English Literature," the following clean cut and judicious paragraph, in which the matter is put in its proper light by that great critic who began by being a great poet, and is still so: "But can I, with regard to Boileau, accept the strange judgment passed upon him by a clever man, whose contemptuous opinion M. Taine endorses, since he quotes it by the way: 'There are two kinds of verse in Boileau: the greater number, which seem to have been written by a schoolboy, and the smaller number, which seem to have been written by a college student'? The clever man who says this (Guillaume Guizot) does not understand Boileau the poet, and I shall go farther and say that he must be incapable of understanding the poet in any poet. I can well understand that poetry should not be supposed to consist of the technical part of the art only, but I fail to understand how, when art is in question, no account should be taken of the art itself, and that consummate workmen who excel in it should be so abused. It would be quicker to suppress all poetry in verse; but if this be not done, the men who knew its secrets should be spoken of more respectfully. Boileau was one of the small number of men who did so, and Pope likewise."

It would be impossible to put the matter more clearly or more correctly. When a poet is in question, the manner in which his verse is wrought is a matter of considerable importance worth studying, for it constitutes in great part the intrinsic value of that verse. It is the stamp with which he mints his gold, silver, or copper. Baudelaire, while he accepted the chief improvements or reforms introduced by Romanticism, such as richness of rimes, the displacement at will of the cæsura, the running into or encroaching upon the next line, the use of exact or technical terms, the fulness and firmness of rhythm, the casting of the great Alexandrine in one unbroken length, and the whole of that careful mechanism of prosody and cadence in stanzas and strophes, Baudelaire nevertheless exhibits in his verse his own peculiar architectonics, his own individual formulæ, his own easily recognised structure, his own professional secrets, his own knack, if I may say so, his own private mark, C. B., which is always to be found upon rime or hemistich.

He makes frequent use of lines of twelve or eight feet, these being the moulds in which he prefers to cast his thoughts. Poems divided into quatrains or stanzas are more numerous in his works than those

in which rimes follow regularly. He is fond of the harmonious interlacing of rimes which postpones the echo of the note first sounded, and strikes the ear with a naturally unexpected sound which, like that in the first line, will be completed later and cause the satisfaction which perfect accord causes in music. He is usually careful that the final rime shall be full, sonorous, and backed up by the supporting consonant, so that it may possess the vibration which prolongs the last note struck.

Among his poems are many which bear the outward appearance and external form of the sonnet, although he has never prefixed the title "Sonnet" to any of them. This is no doubt due to literary scruple, and is an instance of conscientiousness in prosody, of which I fancy I can trace the origin in the article wherein he relates the visit he paid to me and the conversation we had together. It will be remembered that he was bringing me a volume of verse, the work of two absent friends, whom he had been asked to represent. In his account I find the following passage: "After having rapidly glanced through the volume, he called my attention to the fact that these poets too often allowed themselves to indulge in *libertine* sonnets; that is, in

sonnets that were unorthodox and in which the law of the quadruple rime was unhesitatingly neglected." At this time the greater number of "The Flowers of Evil" were already written, and there were among them a good many *libertine* sonnets, which not only lacked the quadruple rime, but in which, furthermore, the rimes were interlaced in wholly irregular fashion; for in the orthodox sonnet, as it was composed by Petrarch, Felicaja, Ronsard, Du Bellay, and Sainte-Beuve, the second and third lines of the quatrains must end in two similar rimes, either masculine or feminine, as the poet pleases, which distinguishes the sonnet quatrain from an ordinary one, and regulates, according as the rime of the first and fourth is mute or sonorous, the order and arrangement of the rimes in the two tercets that complete this form of short poem, which is less difficult to write than Boileau thinks, precisely because of its fixed geometrical form; just as in ceilings, polygonal or oddly designed compartments help, rather than hinder, painters by circumscribing the space within which they must set and keep their figures. Not unfrequently, by the use of foreshortening and ingenious composition, it is possible to place a giant within one of these restricted spaces, and the work gains by being

so concentrated. Similarly a great thought can easily find room to move about in comfort within the fourteen methodically arranged lines.

The rising school allows itself to indulge in very many *libertine* sonnets, and I own this is peculiarly disagreeable to me. Why should a man, if he desires to be untrammelled and to dispose his rimes as he pleases, choose a rigorous form that does not admit of any variation or play of fancy? What can be more illogical and annoying than irregularity in regularity and lack of correspondence in symmetry? Every violation of the rule pains me like a doubtful or false note. The sonnet is a sort of poetic fugue, the theme of which must necessarily recur again and again until it is resolved in the regular way. A writer must therefore submit absolutely to the laws that govern it, or else, if he considers that these laws are old-fashioned, pedantic, and troublesome, he should not write sonnets at all. In this matter the masters to be consulted are the Italians and the poets of the Pleiad, and it would not be out of the way to read the work in which Guillaume Colletet treats, *ex professo*, of the sonnet. It may be said of him that he has exhausted the subject.

But enough on these libertine sonnets which Maynard was the first to make fashionable. As for sonnets duplicated, related, septenary, coda, estrambot, retrograde, repeating, inverted, acrostich, mesostich, lozenge-shaped and saltire, these be pedantic exercises, the models of which are to be found in Rabanus Maurus, in "The Spanish and Italian Apollo," and in the treatise devoted to them by Antonio Tempo, but which should be contemned as mere laboriously puerile difficulties and versified puzzles.

Baudelaire often seeks to produce his musical effects by the use of one or more peculiarly melodious lines that form a refrain, and that reappear in turns, as in the Italian stanza called sextain, of which there are several happy examples in the Count de Gramont's verse. He uses this form, which has something of the faint swing of a magical incantation dimly heard in a dream, in subjects of sorrowful remembrances and unfortunate love. The stanzas, with their monotonous soughing, bear the thought away and bring it back, rocking it the while as a flower fallen from the bank is rocked in the regular volutes of the billows. Like Longfellow and Edgar Allan Poe he occasionally resorts to alliteration, that is, the determinative recur-

rence of a certain consonant which is to produce a harmonious effect within the body of the line. Sainte-Beuve, who perceived every one of these refinements and put them in practice in his own exquisite art, once said, in a sonnet of unspeakable and thoroughly Italian sweetness : —

> "Sorrento restored to me my sweet infinite dream."
> ("Sorrente m'a rendu mon doux rêve infini.")

Any delicate ear will appreciate the charm of the liquid thus brought in four times, and which seems to bear one away on its breast into the infinite of dreams as a sea-gull's feather is borne away on the blue billows of the Bay of Naples. Alliteration is frequently met with in Beaumarchais' prose, and the scalds made large use of it. No doubt these minutiæ will seem very frivolous to utilitarian, progressive, and practical, or simply clever, men who think, with Stendhal, that verse is a childish form that was good enough for the primitive ages, but who insist that poetry should be written in prose as beseems an age of common-sense. Yet it is precisely these minutiæ that cause verse to be good or bad, and that distinguish the true poet from the sham.

Baudelaire is fond of great polysyllabic words, and with three or four such he often writes lines that seem vast and the vibrant resonance of which lengthens the metre. To the poet, words have in themselves, and apart from the meaning they convey, a value and a beauty of their own, like gems yet uncut and unset in bracelets, necklaces, and rings. They delight the connoisseur who gazes upon them and sorts them out with his hand in the little vase wherein they are kept in reserve, just as a jeweller might do when thinking over the design of an ornament of gems. There are words that are diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and others that shine like phosphorus when they are rubbed, and it is no small task to make a choice from among them.

The great Alexandrines of which I was speaking a while ago, and that in calm spells ebb away on the shore with quiet, slow undulations of the swell from the open sea, sometimes break with mad fury of spray and cast their white spume on high against a grim, overhanging cliff, from which they fall back in briny showers. His lines of eight feet are abrupt, violent, cutting like the thongs of a cat-o'-nine-tails, and their lashes sting the shoulders of evil consciences and hypo-

critical compromises. They also lend themselves to the expression of funereal fancies; the author sets in that metre, as in a black wood frame, night views of cemeteries, with nyctalopian eyes of owls shining out of the shadows, and robbers of tombs and body-snatchers, the thieves of death, gliding with spectral steps behind the bronze-green curtain of yew trees. It is in lines of eight feet that he paints sinister heavens in which a moon sicklied o'er by Canidian incantations moves above gibbets; in them that he describes the arctic weariness of the dead woman who has passed from her bed of lechery to the bier, and who dreams in her solitude, abandoned even by the worms, as she starts under the drop of icy rain that has filtered through the boards of the coffin; or again he exhibits to us, in all its litter, pregnant with meaning, of faded bouquets, old letters, ribbons, and miniatures pell-mell with pistols, daggers, and vials of laudanum, the room of the cowardly lover, visited contemptuously, as it takes its walks abroad, by the ironic spectre of suicide, for death itself will not cure him of his shameful lusts.

From the structure of the verse let us pass to the woof and warp of the style. Baudelaire weaves in it threads of silk and gold with strong, rough threads of

hemp, as in those stuffs of the East, at once superb and coarse, in which the most delicate ornaments are embroidered in a delightfully fanciful way upon a ground of harsh camel's-hair or coarse cloth, rough to the touch as sail-cloth. The most coquettish refinements, the most subtle, even, are thrown side by side with grim brutalities, and the reader passes suddenly from the boudoir with its heady scents and its voluptuously languorous conversations, to the vile pot-house where drunkards, mingling blood with their wine, are knifing each other for the sake of a street Helen.

"The Flowers of Evil" are the finest gem in Baudelaire's poetic crown. It is in them that he sounded a note wholly his own, and proved that even after the incalculable number of volumes of verse, which seemed to have exhausted every possible subject, it was still possible to bring to the light something new and unexpected, without necessarily indulging in absurdities or causing the whole procession of universal history to file past as in a German fresco. It was his translation of Edgar Allan Poe, however, that chiefly won him fame; for in France it is the prose works of poets that are read by preference, and it is newspaper articles that spread the knowledge of their verse. Baudelaire natu-

ralised among us that strange genius, so strikingly, so markedly, so exceptionally original, who at the outset scandalised the United States rather than charmed them; not that there is anything in his works to offend morality, — on the contrary, he is chaste as a maiden or a seraph; but he upset all preconceived notions, all practical commonplaces, and afforded no standard by which he could be judged. Edgar Allan Poe shared none of the American ideas on progress, perfectibility, democratic institutions, and other themes for spread-eagle oratory dear to the Philistines of the one and of the other continent. He did not worship the Almighty Dollar exclusively; he loved poetry for its own sake, and preferred the beautiful to the useful; which was monstrous heresy. Furthermore, he possessed the gift of writing well, which has the property of horrifying fools in every clime. A worthy newspaper or magazine editor, a friend of Poe's and kindly disposed towards him, confesses that it was difficult to employ him, and that he could not be paid as well as others, because he wrote in a style too far above the vulgar; which was a very good reason. The biographer of the author of "The Raven" and "Eureka," says that if Edgar Poe had only controlled his genius and applied

his creative power in a way better suited to American ideas, he might have become a money-making author. But he was unruly, insisted on doing as he pleased, and worked only when he felt disposed and only on such subjects as suited his fancy. His vagabond humour led him, like a rolling stone, from Baltimore to New York, from New York to Philadelphia, from Philadelphia to Boston or Richmond, but never allowed him to settle down anywhere. In his moments of gloom, distress, or despair, when the over-excitement due to feverish work was followed by the prostration literary men know so well, he would drink brandy, a fault with which he has been bitterly reproached by the Americans, who, as all the world knows, are models of temperance. He did not blind himself to the disastrous consequences of this vice, for he wrote in "The Black Cat" the following fateful lines: "What disease is there comparable to drink!" He did not drink for the sake of making himself drunk, but in order to forget, or perhaps to put himself in a condition of hallucination favourable to his work, or perhaps again to be done with a life that had become intolerable, and yet to avoid the scandal of a suicide. One day, on the street, he was seized with a fit of delirium tre-

mens, was taken to a hospital and died there, still young and without any perceptible weakening of his faculties; for his unhappy habit had in no respect influenced either his talent or his manners, that to the very end remained the manners of a thorough gentleman; nor, again, his personal beauty, which remained remarkable to the last.

I have rapidly sketched Edgar Allan Poe's character, although I am not engaged in writing his life, because that American author filled so large a place in Baudelaire's intellectual life that it becomes indispensable to speak of him at some length, not biographically, but from the point of view of his doctrines. Poe certainly influenced his translator, Baudelaire, especially during the latter part of the poet's life, alas! too short.

The "Tales of Mystery, Imagination, and Humour," the "Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," and "Eureka" were translated by Baudelaire with such close identification of thought and of style, such faithful and supple freedom, that the translation conveys the impression of an original piece of work and has its masterly perfection. The "Strange Tales" are prefaced by admirable criticisms in which the translator analyses, as a poet, the highly novel and eccentric character of Edgar Allan Poe, whom France, with its utter lack of interest in

foreign individualities, was deeply ignorant of until Baudelaire revealed him to it. He brought to this task, which was necessitated by a character so utterly outside the pale of ordinary ideas, uncommon metaphysical sagacity and rare keenness of vision. These pages are to be reckoned among the most remarkable things he has done.

Curiosity was excited to the highest pitch by the strange tales, so mathematically fantastic, that are developed by means of algebraical formulæ, and which in their expositions resemble judicial inquiries conducted by the most perspicacious and subtle magistrate. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Stolen Letter," "The Gold Bug" — riddles more difficult to guess than those set by the Sphinx, but the answer to which comes in always in so plausible a manner — became all the rage with a public of readers tired of novels of adventure and manners. People went crazy over Auguste Dupin, endowed with so strange and lucid a power of divination, who seems to hold in his hands the thread that connects the most dissimilar ideas, and who reaches his end by such wonderfully correct inductions. They admired Legrand, who was superior, in the deciphering of cryptograms, even to Claude Jacquet, the clerk in the

Government office, who, in "The Story of the Thirteen," reads to the Desmarets, with the old key that belongs to the Portuguese embassy, the cipher letter written by Ferragus, — the result of the reading being the discovery of Captain Kidd's treasure. Every one confessed that while the death's-head and the kid, the rows of dots, crosses, commas, and figures, might have shown again and again, in the light of the flame, in red on the yellowed parchment, they would never have guessed where the great corsair had hidden the huge chest full of diamonds, gems, watches, gold chains, ounces, quadruples, doubloons, rix-dollars, piastres and coins of all countries that reward Legrand's sagacity. "The Pit and the Pendulum," produced a suffocation of terror equal to the most sombre inventions of Anne Radcliffe, Lewis, and the reverend Father Maturin, and readers became giddy as they gazed down the swift-spinning abyss of the Maelstrom, a colossal funnel on the walls of which ships revolve round and round like bits of straw in a whirlpool. The strongest nerves were shaken by "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," while "The Fall of the House of Usher," induced deep melancholy. Tender souls were peculiarly touched by the female figures, so vaporous, so

transparent, so romantically pale and of almost spectral beauty, whom the poet has called Morella, Ligeia, Lady Rowena Trevanion, Lady Tremaine, Eleonora, but which are merely the incarnation under varied forms of an only love that persists after the death of the adored one, and traverses avatars ever revealed.

In France henceforth the name of Baudelaire was indissolubly associated with that of Edgar Allan Poe, and the recollection of the one immediately brings the other to remembrance. At times indeed one would think the American writer's ideas were really the Frenchman's.

Like most poets in the present day, when arts, less widely divided than was the case formerly, are close neighbours and admit of frequent transpositions, Baudelaire had the taste and feeling for, and the knowledge of painting. He wrote some remarkable reviews of the Salon, among others notices on Delacroix, in which he analysed with extreme penetration and subtilty, the artistic nature of the great Romanticist painter. He is full of him, and in some remarks upon Edgar Allan Poe, I come upon this significant sentence : " Like our own Eugène Delacroix, who has raised his art to the level of great poetry, Edgar Poe loves to make his figures

move against purplish and greenish backgrounds, which betray the phosphorescence of rottenness and the odour of the storm." How true is the feeling in this simple sentence called out by the painter's hot and passionate colouring. As a matter of fact the charm of Delacroix for Baudelaire was due to the *diseased* character of his talent, that was so restless, so troubled, so nervous, so inquisitive, so exasperated, so paroxysmal, — if I may be pardoned the expression, which alone renders my thought correctly, — so tormented by the maladies, the melancholy, the feverish ardour, the convulsive efforts, and the vague dreams of the present time.

For a moment the Realistic school fancied it might claim Baudelaire. Some of the pictures in "The Flowers of Evil," outrageously crude in their truthfulness, and in which the poet had not hesitated at the reproduction of hideousness of any sort, led superficial minds to fancy that he was inclining to that doctrine. But they failed to notice that these so-called realistic pictures were always elevated by character, effect, or colour, and that, besides, they formed contrasts to suave and ideal pictures. Baudelaire welcomed the advances made to him, to a certain extent, visited the studios of Realistic artists,

and agreed to write about Courbet, the master painter of Ornans, an article that never appeared. However, at one of the recent Salons, Fantin placed Charles Baudelaire, with his serious expression and his ironical smile, in a corner of the conclave of so-called Realistic painters and sculptors whom he has ranged in a curious frame, like the attendant figures at an apotheosis, round Eugène Delacroix' medallion. Assuredly Baudelaire had the right to appear there as an admirer of Delacroix. But was he intellectually and sympathetically one of that company, whose tendencies could not accord with his aristocratic tastes and his aspiration to the beautiful? In him, as I have already pointed out, the use of the ugly and the vulgar was but a species of manifestation and of horrified protest, and I greatly question whether Courbet's blowzy "Venus," a horrible Callipyge scullion, ever charmed him, for he loved exquisite elegance, refined mannerisms, and skilled coquetry. It is not that he was incapable of admiring grandiose beauty; the man who wrote "The Giantess" must have loved "Dawn" and "Night," the magnificent female colossi, with such superb lines, which Michael Angelo placed upon the pediment of the tomb of the Medici. His philosophical and metaphysical views,

besides, necessarily separated him from that school, with which he should on no account be connected.

Far from delighting in the real, he eagerly sought the abnormal, and when he came upon an original and peculiar type, he followed it up, studied it, tried to find the end of the thread and to unwind it to the very end. It was thus that he had become deeply infatuated with Guys, a mysterious personage whose business it was to repair to any part of the world where an event occurred, in order to make sketches of it for the English illustrated press.

Guys, whom I knew, was a great traveller, a keen and thorough observer, and a true humourist. At a glance he took in the characteristic points of men and things; with a few strokes of his pencil he hit off their likeness on his sketch-book, inked in his outline, as cursive as stenography, and boldly washed it in with a flat tint to indicate the colouring.

He was not an artist, properly speaking, but he had the peculiar gift of rapidly seizing the outward appearance of things. At a glance, with unequalled clear-sightedness, he lighted upon the characteristic trait in anything — that trait, and no other — and brought it out strongly; instinctively or purposely disregarding the

complementary parts. Whether he had to draw a dandy or a street ruffian, a great lady or a girl of the lower class, he was unequalled in marking the attitude, the turn, the personality. He possessed in a high degree the feeling for modern corruption, in the upper and in the lower strata of society alike, and he also gathered his bouquet of flowers of evil in the form of sketches. No one approached Guys in rendering the elegant slenderness and the mahogany gloss of a race-horse, and he was just as clever in the way he made a courtesan's dress fall over the edge of a pony-chaise as in the way he sat a nobleman's powdered and furred coachman on the huge box of a great coupé hung on eight springs and with blazoned panels, driving off to the Queen's Drawing-room with three footmen hanging on to the embroidered straps behind. In this off-hand, clever, fashionable sort of sketching, devoted to high-life subjects, he seems to have been the precursor of the bright artists of *la vie parisienne*, Marcelin, Hadol, Morin, Crafty, whose work is so thoroughly modern, up to date, and telling. Guys, however, not only reproduced, in a way that would have won praise from a Brummel, the dandies in the first flight of fashion and the grand airs of the ducal world, he also excelled in reproducing

the loud dresses and the ribald ways of the venal nymphs of the Argyle Rooms and Piccadilly Hall; nor did he hesitate to make his way into some of the deserted lanes and to sketch by the light of the moon or the quivering flicker of a gas-lamp the figure of one of those spectres of pleasure who wander about the pavements of London; while, when he was in Paris, he sought out, even in the dens described by Eugène Sue, the exaggerated fashions of houses of ill-fame and what might be termed the coquetry of the gutter. Of course all that Guys looked for there was something characteristic. That was his great passion, and he brought out with astonishing accuracy the picturesque and individual side of the types, ways, and dress of our day. His was therefore a talent that could not fail to delight Baudelaire, and in fact the latter prized him highly. I possessed some sixty drawings, sketches, and water-colours by this humourist of the pencil, and I gave some to my poet friend, who was greatly charmed with the gift and bore them off jubilantly.

He quite appreciated the shortcomings of these rapid sketches, to which Guys himself attached no importance once they had been transferred to the wood-block by the clever engravers of the *Illustrated London News;* but he

was struck by the wit, the clear-sightedness and the power of observation, thoroughly literary qualities, expressed by the graphic method. What he liked in these drawings was the complete absence of antiquity, that is, of classical tradition, and the deep feeling for what I shall call "decadence," for lack of a word that will more accurately render my meaning; but I have explained what it was that Baudelaire meant by decadence. He has said somewhere, with reference to these literary distinctions: "It is as if two women were presented to me; the one, a rustic matron, sickeningly healthy and virtuous, without any style or go about her; in a word, *owing nothing save to nature alone:* the other, one of those beauties who compel and haunt one's remembrance, uniting to her own deep and individual charm the eloquence of dress, walking with assured gait, self-conscious, and mistress of herself, speaking with a voice like a well-tuned instrument, her glances charged with thoughts and expressing no more than she chooses. There can be no doubt as to what my choice would be; yet there are pedagogic sphinxes who would be sure to reproach me with failing in my duty to classical honour."

This most original way of looking at modern beauty inverts the problem, for it assumes that the beauty of

antiquity is primitive, coarse, and barbaric, — no doubt a paradoxical opinion, but one that may very well be maintained. Balzac greatly preferred an elegant, dainty, coquettish Parisian woman, her figure set off in her long shawl by the motion of her elbows, tripping furtively to a rendezvous, her Chantilly lace veil drawn down over her face, and bending her head in a way to show, between the lower part of the bonnet and the upper fold of the shawl, an ivory-white neck upon which curl in the light two or three wisps of stray hair, — he preferred her, I repeat, to the Venus of Milo herself. And there is no doubt that the Parisian woman has a charm of her own, though I myself like the Venus of Milo a great deal better; but that is because, in consequence of my early education and a peculiar sense, I am more an artist than a literary man.

It can be understood that, holding such views as these, Baudelaire should for a time have felt drawn towards the realistic school of which Courbet is the god and Manet the high-priest. But if certain sides of his nature found satisfaction in the direct and non-traditional representation of contemporary ugliness, or triviality, at least his love for art, elegance, luxury, and beauty drew him towards a higher sphere, and Dela-

croix, with his feverish passion, his stormy colouring, his poetic melancholy, his sunset palette, and his skilled technique of a decadent artist, became and remained his chosen master.

I now come to a remarkable work of Baudelaire's, half a translation, half original, called "Artificial Paradises, Opium and Hascheesh," upon which I must dwell, for it had no small share in spreading among the public, ever ready to accept as true reports unfavourable to literary men, the belief that the author of "The Flowers of Evil" was in the habit of seeking inspiration in stimulants. This belief was further confirmed by the poet's death, which followed upon a stroke of paralysis that rendered him powerless to communicate his thoughts, which remained quick and active in his brain. It was said that the paralysis was due to the excessive use of hascheesh or opium, in which Baudelaire had at first indulged through fancy, and which he had continued in consequence of the fatal attraction exercised by deadly drugs. As a matter of fact, the one and only cause of his illness was the fatigue, the annoyances, the troubles and embarrassments of all sorts that are inherent in literary life in the case of all men whose talent does not lend itself to regular

and easily produced work, such as newspaper work, for instance, and the originality of whose productions terrifies timid editors of reviews. Like every worker, Baudelaire was sober, and while he admitted that a taste for creating an "artificial paradise" by means of some stimulant, whether opium, hascheesh, wine, alcohol, or tobacco, seems to be ingrained in man's nature, since it is to be met within every age, in every country, among barbarians as among civilised men, and even among savages, he considered it a proof of original perversity, an impious attempt to avoid *needful* pain, a mere Satanic suggestion to usurp at once the happiness intended to reward, later, resignation, force of will, virtue, and persistent striving after the good and the beautiful. He believed that the devil said to hascheesh eaters and laudanum bibbers, as formerly to our first parents: "In the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods," and that he lied to them just as he had lied to Adam and Eve; for the next day the god, weakened and enervated, has sunk below the level of the brute, and remains isolated in void immense, bereft of all means of escaping from himself save by having recourse to his poison, the dose of which he is compelled to increase gradually. It is possible and even

probable that Baudelaire did try hascheesh once or twice, by way of physiological experiment, but he never made continuous use of it. Besides, he felt much repugnance for that sort of happiness, bought at the chemist's and taken away in the vest-pocket, and he compared the ecstasy it induces to that of a maniac for whom painted canvas and rough drop-scenes take the place of real furniture and gardens balmy with the scent of genuine flowers. He came but seldom, and merely as an observer, to the meetings in Pimodan House, where our club met, meetings which I have described in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, under the title "The Hascheesheen Club," adding an account of my own hallucinations. After trying it some ten times or so, I gave up the seductive drug for ever, not that it hurt me physically, but because a real writer needs no other than his own natural dreams, and does not care to have his thought controlled by the influence of any agency whatever.

Balzac came to one of these evenings, and Baudelaire thus relates his visit: "Balzac no doubt held the belief that there is no deeper shame nor worse suffering for a man than to renounce control over his own will. I saw him once at a meeting where the prodigious

effects of hascheesh were being discussed. He listened and asked questions with amusing attention and vivacity. Those who knew him will readily guess that he was interested. But the idea of thinking in spite of himself shocked him deeply; he was offered some dawamesk; he examined it, smelt it, and returned it without touching it. The struggle between his almost childish curiosity and his dislike for abdication exhibited itself on his expressive face in a striking manner. The love of self-dignity won the day. And indeed it is difficult to think of the theorist of *will*, of Louis Lambert's spiritual twin, consenting to part with a single particle of that precious *substance*."

I was at Pimodan House that night, and I am in a position to certify to the absolute accuracy of the story. I will merely add this characteristic trait: as he handed back the spoonful of dawamesk that had been offered him, Balzac remarked that it would be of no use to make the test, for he was sure that hascheesh would have no effect upon his brain.

This was quite possible, for his powerful brain, the seat of a will fortified by study, saturated with the subtle aroma of mocha, and that was not in the least dimmed by the drinking of three bottles of the headiest

Vouvray, might well have been capable of resisting the transitory intoxication caused by Indian hemp. Hascheesh or dawamesk, I find I have forgotten to say, is simply a decoction of *Cannabis Indica*, mixed with some fatty substance, honey, and pistachio, in order to make it of the consistency of paste or preserves.

Medically speaking, "The Artificial Paradises" constitute a very well written monograph of hascheesh, and science might find in it reliable information; for Baudelaire piqued himself on being scrupulously accurate, and not for the world would he have allowed the smallest poetic imagery to slip into a subject that was naturally adapted to it. He specifies quite correctly the peculiar character of hascheesh hallucinations, which does not create anything, but merely develops the particular temperament of the individual while exaggerating it to its highest power. What is seen is one's own self, enlarged, rendered more acutely sensitive, excited beyond all reason, outside the confines of time and space, of which the very notion vanishes, in surroundings that are real to begin with, but which are speedily deformed, intensified, exaggerated, and in which every detail, extreme in its intensity, assumes supernatural importance, that, however, is readily apprehended by the

hascheesh eater, who perceives mysterious relations between images often incongruous.

If there should be heard music apparently performed by a celestial orchestra and seraph choirs, in comparison with which the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven are but annoying discords, it is because a hand has fingered the keyboard of the piano or a distant organ has cast into the noise of the street some well known opera air. If the eyes are dazzled by the streaming, the scintillation, the irradiation, and the coruscation of light, it is because so many tapers are blazing in sconces and candelabra. If the wall ceases to be opaque and reveals a hazy distance, far reaching and azured, like a window opened out into the infinite, it is because a mirror is shimmering opposite the dreamer, with its diffused shadows mingled with fantastic transparencies. The nymphs, the goddesses, the graceful, or burlesque, or terrible apparitions are produced by the pictures, the tapestries, the statues that exhibit their mythological nudity in niches, or by the grotesques that are grimacing on the whatnots.

The case is the same with the olfactory ecstasies that transport one into paradises of perfumes, where marvellous flowers, their cups swinging as if they were

censers, scatter the scent of aromatics, and nameless, subtly penetrating odours, that recall the remembrance of lives that have been lived already, of balmy, distant shores, and of primitive loves in some dreamland Tahiti. One need not look long to discover in the room a pot of heliotrope or tuberose, a scented sachet, or a cashmere shawl impregnated with patchouli and carelessly thrown upon a chair.

It will be seen, then, that if it is desired to enjoy fully the wonders of hascheesh, they have to be prepared beforehand, and motives, so to speak, must be furnished for its extravagant changes, and its disorderly fancies. It is necessary to be in sound physical and mental condition, to be free for the nonce from cares and duties and appointments, and to be in a room such as Baudelaire loved, and such as Edgar Allan Poe, in his descriptions, furnishes with poetic comfort, quaint luxury, and mysterious elegance; a retreat concealed from all eyes, which seems to await the beloved soul, the ideal womanly form, the one that Chateaubriand in his language calls *the sylphid.* Under these circumstances it is probable, indeed almost certain, that naturally agreeable sensations will turn into beatitude, ravishment, ecstasy, inexpressible delight, far superior to the material

joys promised to the faithful in that Mahometan paradise which too closely resembles a seraglio. The green, red, and white houris that emerge from the hollow pearls they inhabit and offer themselves to the faithful in ever renewed virginity, would be but coarse wenches in comparison with the nymphs, the angels, the sylphids, perfumed mists, ideal transparencies, forms breathed out of rosy and azure light, standing out bright against suns and emerging from the depths of the infinite with starry rush, like the silvery globules in gaseous liquids from out a crystal cup, whom the hascheesh eater sees passing in countless legions through the dream he dreams while wide-awake.

But for these precautions the ecstasy may well turn to nightmare. Delight changes into suffering, joy into terror; terrible anguish clutches at the throat, presses its knee upon the chest, and crushes the dreamer with its tremendous weight, as if the Sphinx of the Pyramids or the King of Siam's elephant were indulging in the fun of flattening him out. Or else icy cold seizes upon him and turns him into marble up to the hips, like the king in the "Thousand and One Nights," half changed into a statue, whose wicked wife beat him every morning on the shoulders, which had remained sensitive.

Baudelaire relates the hallucinations of two or three men of different temperaments, and one experienced by a woman in the room lined with mirrors, over which runs gilded trellis-work festooned with flowers, which it is easy to recognise as being the boudoir in Pimodan House, and he adds to each vision an analytical and moral commentary, in which is plainly seen his repugnance to any happiness obtained by fictitious means. To begin with, the ideas themselves are not so entrancing as is believed. Their main charm is due to the extreme nervous excitement of the subject. Then hascheesh, which creates these ideas, at the same time destroys the power of turning them to account, for it annihilates the will and plunges its victims into a languid weariness which renders the mind incapable of any exertion, and which can be overcome only by taking another dose. "Finally," adds Baudelaire, "even if we admit for the moment that there may be constitutions sufficiently strong and vigorous to resist the evil effects of the noxious drug, there remains another danger which must not be lost sight of, the deadly, terrible danger of habit. The man who has recourse to poison in order *to make himself* think, will soon be unable to think *unless he takes* poison. What must be the fate of a man whose

paralysed imagination is unable to work without the help of hascheesh and opium!"

Farther on he states his profession of faith in the following noble words: "Man is not so deprived of legitimate ways of reaching heaven that he should be compelled to call upon pharmacy and witchcraft. There is no reason why he should sell his soul in order to purchase the love and the intoxicating caresses of houris. What can a paradise be worth if it has to be gained at the expense of one's eternal salvation?" There follows a description of an Olympus situated upon the steep mount of spirituality where Raphael's or Mantegna's Muses, led by Apollo, surround with their rhythmic choirs the artist who has devoted himself to the worship of beauty, and reward his persistent efforts. "Below him," goes on Baudelaire, "at the foot of the mount, amid brambles and mud, the host of men, the band of helots, simulate the grimaces of enjoyment and utter howls drawn from one and all by the sting of the poison, while the saddened poet says to himself: 'These unfortunates, who have neither prayed nor fasted, who have refused to be saved by work, are asking of black magic the power to rise all at once into a supernatural state of life. Sorcery deceives them and

makes sham happiness and sham light to shine upon them, while we poets and philosophers, who have regenerated our souls by constant work and contemplation, by assiduous exercise of will and unchanging nobleness of purpose, have created for our own use a garden of real beauty. Trusting to the declaration that faith can remove mountains, we have accomplished the one miracle God allows us to perform.' "

These words make it difficult to believe that the author of "The Flowers of Evil," in spite of his *satanic* tendencies, paid any frequent visits to artificial paradises.

The study of hascheesh is followed by a study of opium; in this case Baudelaire was guided by a singular work, very famous in England: "The Confessions of an Opium-Eater," by Thomas de Quincey, a distinguished hellenist, a writer of mark, an eminently respectable man, who dared, with tragic candour, to confess, in the country which, of all countries, is most hide-bound in cant, to confess his passion for opium, to describe it, to state its phases, its intermittent character, his own falls and struggles, his enthusiasm and depression, his ecstasies and weird visions, followed by inexpressible tortures. Incredible though it may appear,

de Quincey had got to drinking eight thousand drops a day, by gradually increasing the doses he took; yet he reached the perfectly normal age of seventy-five, dying only in December, 1859, keeping the medical faculty, to whom, in a fit of humour, he had ironically bequeathed his opium-saturated body as an interesting subject for examination, waiting a long time. His vice did not prevent his publishing a large number of literary and erudite works, in which there is nothing to betray the deadly influence of what he himself calls "the black idol." The closing lines of the book give the reader to understand that by putting forth superhuman efforts the author at last managed to rid himself of his thrall, but possibly that is but a concession to morality and conventionality, like virtue rewarded and crime punished at the end of a melodrama, final impenitence being a bad example to set. De Quincey pretends that after using opium for seventeen years and abusing it for eight more he succeeded in giving up the dangerous drug! One should not discourage *theriakis* who manifest good intentions, but is there not infinite love in this lyrical invocation to the brown liquid?

"O just, subtle, and all-conquering opium! that to the hearts of rich and poor alike, for the wounds that

will never heal, and for the pangs of grief that 'tempt the spirit to rebel,' bringest an assuaging balm; — eloquent opium! that with thy potent rhetoric stealest away the purposes of wrath, pleadest effectually for relenting pity, and through one night's heavenly sleep callest back to the guilty man the visions of his infancy, and hands washed pure from blood; — O just and righteous opium! that to the chancery of dreams summonest, for the triumphs of despairing innocence, false witnesses; and confoundest perjury; and dost reverse the sentences of unrighteous judges; — thou buildest upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain, cities and temples, beyond the art of Phidias and Praxiteles — beyond the splendours of Babylon and Hekatompylos; and 'from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,' callest into sunny light the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances, cleansed from the 'dishonours of the grave.' Thou only givest these gifts to man; and thou hast the keys of Paradise, O just, subtle, and mighty opium!"

Baudelaire did not translate de Quincey's book in full; he selected the most striking passages and con-

nected them by means of an analysis mingled with digressions and philosophical reflections so as to form an abridgment that would represent the entire work. Very curious indeed are the biographical details prefixed to the Confessions, in which are related the flight of the schoolboy from the tyranny of his teachers, his wandering, wretched, and starving life in the great wilderness of London, his sojourn in the lodging transformed by the landlord's neglect into an attic, his connection with the semi-idiotic maid of all work and with Ann, a poor girl, an unhappy gutter-flower, innocent and virginal even in her prostitution, his being forgiven by his family and his coming into a fortune large enough to enable him to devote himself to his favourite studies in a lovely cottage, in the society of a noble woman whom, Orestes of opium, he calls his Electra. For, in consequence of neuralgic pains, he had already acquired the ineradicable habit of the poison, of which he ere long absorbed, without harmful effects, the terrific dose of forty grains a day. There are but few poems of Byron, Coleridge, or Shelley that surpass the strange and grand magnificence of de Quincey's dreams. The most dazzling visions, illumined by the blue and silver glories of paradise or Elysium are fol-

lowed by others more dark than Erebus, to which may be applied the poet's sombre lines: —

> "With hue like that when some great painter dips
> His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse."

De Quincey, who was a distinguished and precocious humanist, — he knew Greek and Latin when only ten years old, — had always taken particular delight in reading Livy, and the words *Consul Romanus* sounded to him like an all-compelling magical formula. The five syllables reverberated in his ears with the vibration of clarions blaring triumphantly, and when, in his visions, hostile multitudes contended upon a battlefield with low thunder of trampling feet and dying cries, illumined by a livid light, suddenly a mysterious voice shouted aloud the words that made themselves heard over the din: *Consul Romanus!* On all around, filled with anxious expectation, deep silence fell, and the Consul appeared, riding a white horse, in the centre of the vast swarming mass, like Marius in Decamps' "Battle of the Cymri," and with a fateful gesture decided the victory.

At other times, figures he had beheld in reality mingled in his dreams and haunted them like obstinate

spectres that yield to no formula of exorcism. One day in the year 1813, a Malay, with yellow, bilious complexion and eyes filled with nostalgia, coming from London and striving to reach some seaport or other, unacquainted with a single word of any European language, knocked at the cottage door and asked to be allowed to rest himself. Not wishing, in the presence of his servants, to seem not to understand him, de Quincey addressed the man in Greek; the Oriental answered in Malay, and honours were easy. The owner of the cottage, after giving the man some money, impelled by the charitable impulse that leads a smoker to offer a cigar to some poor wretch who has probably not tasted tobacco for a long time, presented the Malay with a large lump of opium, which the latter swallowed at a gulp. There was enough to kill seven or eight people not used to the drug, but the yellow-skinned man was no doubt accustomed to it, for he went off with every mark of deepest gratitude and satisfaction. He was never again seen, in the flesh, at least, but he became one of the most frequent figures in de Quincey's visions. This Malay, with his saffron face and weirdly black eyes, became a sort of genie from the Far East, who held the keys of Ind, Japan, China, and other

countries that, so far as rest of the world is concerned, are fantastically and impossibly distant. Just as one follows the steps of an unbidden guide, whom one must nevertheless follow, as the result of the unavoidable consequences that occur in dreams, de Quincey penetrated, in the company of the Malay, into regions of fabulous age and inexpressible singularity, that filled him with profound terror. "I know not," he says in his Confessions, "whether others share my feelings on this point; but I have often thought that if I were compelled to forego England, and to live in China, among Chinese manners and modes of life and scenery, I should go mad. . . . A young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man renewed. . . . In China, over and above what it has in common with the rest of southern Asia, I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, by the barrier of utter abhorrence placed between myself and *them*, by counter-sympathies deeper than I can analyse. I could sooner live with lunatics, with vermin, with crocodiles or snakes."

With malicious irony, the Malay, who appeared to note the repugnance felt by the opium-eater, took care to lead him into vast cities, with porcelain towers, roofs with up-curving eaves, adorned with bells that tinkled

ceaselessly, rivers laden with junks, and crossed by carved dragons in the shape of bridges, streets swarming with an unnumbered population of grotesque figures that wagged their little heads inset with almond-shaped eyes, moving their quivering tails like rats, and uttering, with many a bow, monosyllabic compliments.

The sequel to the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" bears the sadly appropriate title *Suspiria de profundis*. In one of the visions appear three unforgettable figures, mysteriously terrible like the Greek Moiræ and the "Mothers" of the second part of "Faust." They are the companions of Levana, the austere goddess who raises the new-born one from the earth and makes him perfect through suffering. Even as there are three Graces, three Parcæ, three Furies, and once even the Muses were but three, so there are three Ladies of Sorrow: the equivalents of our Mother of Sorrows. The eldest of the trio is called *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears; the second, *Mater Suspiriorum*, Our Lady of Sighs; and the third and youngest, *Mater Tenebrarum*, Our Lady of Darkness; she is the most dread of all, and the strongest mind cannot dwell upon the thought of her without experiencing secret horror. These woeful spectres

speak not the tongue of man; they weep, they moan, and make weird gestures in the dim darkness. It is thus they express unknown woes, nameless agonies, the suggestions of lonely despair, all the suffering, the bitterness and grief that lie in the deepest recesses of the human soul. Man must learn his lesson from these hard teachers: "So shall he see the things that ought *not* to be seen, sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths."

It will readily be understood that Baudelaire does not withhold from de Quincey the reproaches he addresses to all who seek to rise to the supernatural through material means, but he treats him with much kindliness in consideration of the *beauty* of the pictures drawn by the illustrious and poetic dreamer.

About this time Baudelaire left Paris and pitched his tent in Brussels. It was not politics that led him to make the change, but his longing for a quieter life and restful peace, far from the excitements of Parisian existence. He does not seem to have profited by the change, for he worked but little in Brussels, and his papers contain only brief, concise, almost hieroglyphic notes, which he alone could have made anything of.

His health, instead of improving, grew worse, either because it was more shattered than he was aware of himself, or because the climate did not suit him. The first symptoms of the disease manifested themselves in slowness of speech and more and more marked hesitation in the selection of words; as Baudelaire, however, often expressed himself in a slow and sententious fashion, dwelling on the words to give them greater weight, his difficulty of speech was not noticed, albeit it was the forerunner of the terrible malady that was to slay him, and which ere long showed itself in the form of a sudden attack. The report of his death spread through Paris with the winged swiftness of ill news, which seems to travel faster than electricity along its guiding wires. Baudelaire was still alive, but the news, though false, was merely prematurely true; he never recovered from the shock. Brought back from Brussels by his relatives and friends, he lingered on for a few months, unable to speak and unable to write, paralysis having snapped the chain that links speech and thought together. Thought remained alive in his brain, as could plainly be perceived by the expression of his eyes, but it was a prisoner and gagged, devoid of any means of communicating with

the outer world from the earthly cell which was to open only within the tomb. But why linger upon the incidents of that sorrowful end? There is no pleasant way of dying, but it is painful for the survivors to watch the passing away so early of a remarkable talent that was capable of bearing fruit for a still longer time, and to lose on the path of life, ever becoming more and more lonely, a comrade of their youth.

Besides "The Flowers of Evil," his translations of Edgar Allan Poe, "Artificial Paradises," art reviews, and literary criticisms, Charles Baudelaire left a volume of short poems in prose that appeared at various times in newspapers or reviews, which ere long tired of these dainty masterpieces uninteresting to the ordinary run of readers, and compelled the poet, whose noble obstinacy refused to make the slightest concession, to take the next series to a more venturesome or more literary publication. For the first time these poems, scattered pretty much everywhere, and very difficult to find, have been collected into one volume, which will prove to be one of the strongest claims of the poet to be remembered by posterity.

In a short preface, addressed to Arsène Houssaye, and prefixed to the "Short Prose Poems," Baudelaire

relates how the idea of making use of this hybrid form, half prose, half verse, occurred to him : —

" I have a confession to make to you. It was while glancing, for the twentieth time at least, through Aloysius Bertrand's famous 'Gaspard of the Night' (a work known to you, to me, and to some of my friends has surely every right to be entitled famous), that the thought occurred to me to try something of the same sort, and to apply to the description of modern life, or rather to a modern and more abstract life, the method he applied to the picturing of the strangely picturesque life of antiquity.

" Which of us has not, in his ambitious moments, dreamed of a miraculous prose, poetic, musical, without rhythm or rime, pliant enough yet varied enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, to the fluctuations of reverie, to the fits and starts of conscience ? "

It is needless to say that there is not the remotest resemblance between " Gaspard of the Night," and the " Short Prose Poems." Baudelaire himself realised the fact as soon as he entered upon the work, and he took due note of this *accident*, of which any other man might perchance be proud, but which was deeply humiliating

to a mind accustomed to consider it the highest honour for a poet to do *exactly* what he intended to do.

Baudelaire, it will be seen, meant invariably to have his will govern his inspiration and to introduce into art a sort of infallible mathematical method. He reproached himself with having turned out something differing from what he had intended, even if it proved to be, as in this case, a strong and original piece of work.

It must be owned that our poetic speech, in spite of the earnest efforts made by the new school to render it more supple and more ductile, does not readily lend itself to the rendering of uncommon and circumstantial details, especially when subjects of modern, familiar, or luxurious life have to be treated. While French verse no longer, as of yore, abhors accuracy of expression and clings to periphrase, its very structure is opposed to the expression of significant peculiarities, and if it persists in forcing these to enter within its narrow setting, the verse itself quickly becomes harsh, rocky, and unpleasant. So the "Short Prose Poems" have come most seasonably to make up for this impotence, and in this form, which calls for exquisite art, and in which every word must be weighed, ere it is

used, in balances more delicate than those of Quentin Matsys' "Misers," since each must bear the right inscription, and have the right weight and sound, Baudelaire brought out a precious, dainty, and odd side of his talent. He has managed to get closer to the inexpressible, and to render the fleeting shades that hover between sound and colour, and thoughts that resemble motives of arabesques or musical themes.

This form is applied successfully not to physical nature only, but to the most secret motions of the soul, to fanciful melancholy, to the splenetic hallucinations of nervous temperaments. The author of "The Flowers of Evil" has drawn marvellous effects from it, and it is surprising at times to find that speech manages to show objects apparently impossible to describe, and hitherto never *reduced* by verbs, now through the transparent gauzy veils of dreams, now with the sudden sharpness of a sunbeam that brings out vividly, in the bluish openings in the distance, a ruined tower, a mountain crest, or a clump of trees. It will be part of Baudelaire's glory, if not his greatest claim to it, to have brought within the possibilities of style numbers of objects, sensations, and effects, unnamed by Adam, the great nomenclator. No writer can wish for higher

praise, and he who wrote the "Short Prose Poems" undoubtedly deserves it.

It is very difficult, unless one has much space at one's command, and in that case it is better to refer the reader to the pieces themselves, to give a correct idea of these compositions: pictures, medallions, *bassi-relievi*, statuettes, enamels, pastels, cameos, following one another somewhat in the way the vertebræ do in a serpent's backbone. A few of them may be removed, yet the pieces join again, still living, each possessing its own individual soul, and convulsively writhing onwards towards an unattainable ideal.

Before I bring to a close, as briefly as possible, this already too lengthy account, — for if I do not I shall leave no room in the volume for the author and friend whose talent I am analysing, and the commentary would obscure the work,— I must be satisfied with quoting the titles of a few of these short poems in prose, which, in my opinion, are infinitely superior, in intensity, concentration, depth, and grace, to the dainty fancies in "Gaspard of the Night," which Baudelaire had taken for a model. Among the fifty poems composing the volume, and which differ in tone and structure, I shall draw attention to "The Cake,"

"The Double-bedded room," "The Crowds," "The Widows," "The Old Mountebank," "A Hemisphere in a Head of Hair," "An Invitation to Travel," "Beauteous Dorothea," "A Heroic Death," "The Thyrsis," "Portraits of Mistresses," "Longing to Paint," "A Blood Horse," and especially "The Blessings of the Moon," an admirable poem in which the poet expresses with magical illusory power what the English painter Millais has so completely failed to render in his "Eve of Saint Agnes": that is, the descent of the orb of night within a room, with its blue phosphorescent light, its iridescent pearly grays, its mistiness interpenetrated by beams in which flutter mothlike, silvery atoms. From its cloud throne the moon bends over the cradle of a sleeping child, bathing it in living light and luminous poison; the pretty pale head is endowed by it with its strange blessings, and like a fairy godmother it whispers in the child's ear: "Thou shalt for ever feel the influence of my kisses; thou shalt be fair as I am fair; thou shalt love what I love: water and clouds, silence and night, the mighty green sea, the wave or fickle or still, the place where thou art not, the lover thou knowest not, monstrous flowers and scents that weaken the will, and cats that writhe

on pianos and moan like women with harsh, soft voices."

I know nothing comparable to this charming poem save the poem of Li-Tai-Pe, so well translated by Judith Walter, in which the Empress of China sweeps on, amid effulgent irradiation, while the folds of her white satin dress trail upon the jade steps that sparkle in the moonlight. A *lunatic* alone could so fully understand the moon and its mysterious speech.

When listening to Weber's music, the first sensation is something like mesmeric sleep, a sort of appeasing that wafts one away from life without the least shock; then there suddenly sounds in the distance a strange note, at which one pricks up one's ears. It is like a sigh from the supernatural world, like the voice of invisible spirits calling to each other. Oberon has just blown his horn, and the enchanted forest opens out, its hazy blue drives prolonged endlessly, swarming with all the fanciful beings Shakespeare describes in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," while Titania herself appears clothed in her transparent silver gauze dress.

Often while reading "Short Prose Poems" have I been impressed in this way; a sentence, a word — a single word — oddly selected and oddly placed calling

up a world of unknown, forgotten faces that yet were the faces of friends, reviving the remembrance of former and far distant lives, and making me feel the presence around me of a mysterious chorus of vanished thoughts, softly whispering amid the ghosts of things that are ever separating from reality. Other sentences, morbidly tender, seem like music, to murmur consolations to unconfessed sorrows and hopeless despair. But one must beware, for they inspire nostalgia just as the *Ranz des Vaches* did to the poor Swiss lansknecht, in the German ballad, who was stationed at Strasburg, swam across the Rhine, was caught, brought back and shot "because he had listened too much to the Alpine horn."

VICTOR HUGO

I

PROSPECTUS FOR NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

AUGUST–SEPTEMBER, 1835.

"NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS" is a work that has passed beyond the need of praise, for the numerous editions it has gone through speak more eloquently than I can in this respect; they have followed one another with prodigious rapidity, and yet have not been numerous enough to satisfy the demands of the public. It is unquestionably the most popular novel of the day, and its success has been complete. Artists and men of the world have been at one in their admiration of it; even the most hostile critics have been unable to refrain from joining in the universal applause, and if it were permissible to set bounds to a genius which is in the prime of its powers and which has such a future before it, it might be said that "Notre-Dame de Paris" is and will remain the poet's finest work.

The novel is a real Iliad. Everything is to be met with in that prose epic, which, had not Victor Hugo been famous already, would alone have made his name for ever illustrious. There is variety in the characters, accuracy in the costumes, lofty, sublime eloquence, genuine, irresistible fun, broad historical views, a pliant and strong plot, a deep feeling for art, Benedictine-like erudition, poetic flow, — everything, in a word.

Byron, who, of all poets, has created the most attractive ideal feminine figures, has not one to oppose to the divine Esmeralda; Gulnare, Medora, and Haydee are as lovely, but not lovelier, and they are not as touching.

Maturin would not have imparted less vigour to the sombre character of Frollo, devoured by his thirst for science, which changes to thirst for love.

Phœbus de Chateaupers cuts as fine a figure under his war harness as the handsome, dark-complexioned, smiling youths, dressed in velvet, who swagger in Paolo Veronese's pictures, with falcon on fist and dog in leash. His careless, brutal good nature is painted with a masterly hand. It is life and truth in very deed.

And who is there who has not laughed with all his heart at the troubles of peripatetic Gringoire, with his

doublet gaping at every seam, his shoes in holes, and his ever unsatisfied appetite? Régnier's starving poets are drawn with no freer and bolder touch.

Then Quasimodo, monstrous snail with Notre-Dame for a shell! Who has not admired his canine devotion and his angelic virtues concealed in a fiend-like frame? Who has not blamed Esmeralda somewhat for not loving him in spite of his double hump, his one eye, his knock-kneed leg, and his boar's-tusk? Who has not wept over poor Chantefleurie? And against how magnificent a background stand out all these figures that have become typical! The whole of Old Paris: its churches, its palaces, its bastiles, Louis XI's privy chamber, and the Court of Miracles; a dead city unearthed and resurrected; a Gothic Pompeii drawn from out the ground; two thousand folio volumes studied, an amount of erudition that would have terrified a German of the Middle Ages acquired on purpose for this! And over it all a dazzling, splendid granite and bronze style, as indestructible as the cathedral it celebrates.

"Notre-Dame de Paris" has even now become a classic.

II

ANGELO

JULY 5, 1835.

ORDINARY dramatists need no more than a single performance. All they care to do is to occupy the stage for a space of three or four hours, to collect, in a part composed for the purpose, all the effective hits of a popular actor, and to furnish an actress with a pretext for changing her dress several times, — so that in the first act she shall wear a white figured satin gown; in the second, one of black velvet, and in the third the inevitable wrapper of organdie or muslin in which she may writhe wildly on the floor without fearing to tear her skirt or to stain it with oil in the middle of a dramatic convulsion. Many a play has been put together merely for the purpose of enabling Miss So and So to show off all her diamonds. But once the satin has lost its gloss, the folds of the velvet have become flabby, and the diamonds have been locked up in the jewel-case, then the play sinks to the lowest depths of sombre Lethe and is forgotten by everybody, including the author himself, who vamps it up six months later, without either he himself or the public being conscious of

the fact. It is true that in the later piece the diva's dress is of gold-flowered brocade, and that she wears feathers instead of a turban, which greatly differentiates the character and turns the old play into a brand-new one.

For such writers a short column of prose worked up hastily, with the name and date at the bottom, suffices to indicate, in the vast dramatic graveyard, the exact place where each of their abortions is buried. But one cannot act in such wise with Hugo.

Every drama by Hugo makes a fine book. All is not over when the curtain has fallen, and the star been called to the footlights. What is of importance to others is but a mere detail to him. The play may have run sixty nights, like "Hernani," or have had but a single performance, like "The King's Sport," it matters not a whit. It matters so little that it is now a well-recognised fact that this same "The King's Sport," so outrageously hissed, is Hugo's best play. The reading public has reversed the judgment of the theatre-going public, and the book has set the theatre right. Every individual in the crowd that shouted Ho! and Ha! at the finest passages, applauded separately. For the poet, face to face with the individual, and freed from countless

material obstructions — wrong reflections from the footlights, a nose here, a pair of legs there, mistakes in the stage setting, and general lack of intelligence — seized upon the man, filled him with his breath, and bore him away on his mighty pinions far above the old hall of the Français.

"Angelo" has met with better fortune upon the stage. Dramas, like books, have their fates. "Angelo" goes on its triumphant way amid the gravest political preoccupations and in a temperature almost tropical. Every day the line at the doors lengthens out and sweeps in the distance through the obscure corridors of the Palais-Royal.

I shall not describe the plot of the play, for everybody is acquainted with it, but I shall treat the book from the point of view of art and style.

The cause of the complete success of "Angelo" is its total lack of lyricism. It is shameful to have to own to that with regard to the public, but so it is. Another and equally sad cause of success is that "Angelo" is a prose drama. Hugo, having resolved to walk on earth, instead of soaring in the heavens, so that the pit might not lose sight of him, wisely put away his talaria in a drawer; for poets are like the hip-

pogriff, they can both run and fly, while the most envious of prose-writers can run only. Any poet, if he chooses to condescend to such a job, can write excellent prose, but never will a born prose-writer, even were he a Chateaubriand, write fine verse.

I have said that the play is not lyrical. Yet at times Hugo's eagle soars loftily, and many of the sentences are genuine strophes of odes. By a somewhat curious contradiction, nearly every one of these passages is applauded to the echo.

Hugo's character is neither English, French, nor German. He is neither profound and human like Shakespeare, magnificently placid and indifferent like Goethe, nor witty and full of sense like Molière. He is self-willed and excessive; he is Spanish and Castilian. He is willing enough to admire Homer and the Bible, if you insist on his doing so, but it is quite certain that he would give the pair of them for the Romancero.

His genius is kin to that of old Corneille, proud and fiercely bristling. Although from time to time he indulges in leonine graces, in giant mincing affectations, he is a terrible draughtsman, quite capable of repeating with Michael Angelo that oil-painting is fit for women and idlers only. He goes straight to the muscles, frees

them from the flesh, and brings them out with prodigious vigour. There are passages in Hugo that might be mistaken for the figures placed in the coigns and pendentives of the Sistine Chapel, whose adductor and extensor muscles are all equally over-developed. But the exaggeration in his style is like that in the men of Buonarotti's, it is an exaggeration in bronze.

Puget said that blocks of marble trembled like leaves when they felt him drawing near, and that they melted in his hands like wax; I fancy the case must be the same with the blocks out of which our poet carves his thoughts. I think I can see him with his iron chisel sending huge pieces flying in every direction, carving with an axe rather than with a chisel, hammering open with mighty blows the gaping mouth of a tragic mask, and working broadly, robustly, without finickiness or daintiness, as behooves a primitive artist whose figures are to be set up on high.

Amid the general enfeeblement of our modern life, in this age of ours when no one thing has preserved any sharp corners, a character with such clean-cut, unworn edges is a regular wonder. That mighty genius should not have been born in our times; he should have appeared in the sixteenth century, shortly before

the production of the "Cid." Not that he would have been greater; but he would have been happier. At that time he would not have had to look upon either the Pantheon or the Exchange; he could have been a painter, a sculptor, an architect, an engineer, and a poet, like Da Vinci, Benvenuto, Buonarotti, and all the rest, for his is an essentially plastic genius, loving and seeking form, like every true young genius. Form is everything, no matter what may have been prated on the subject. Never has a stone quarry been looked upon as an artist of genius; the important point is the fashioning of the stone; else what difference would there be between a block and a statue? What difference would there be between Victor Ducange and Victor Hugo?

The world is the quarry; ideas are the stones, and the poet is the sculptor. The whole question is, does he or does he not know his business.

"Angelo" is a drama in which the tragedy springs from the shock of the situations rather than from a primitive passion. It belongs to the class that comprises "Cymbeline," "Measure for Measure," and "Troilus and Cressida," — romantic plays of Shakespeare's which rest upon adventures and not upon

generalities, and which are the only dramas possible in a civilisation so highly developed as ours. It is scarcely possible now to construct a play with a mortal sin or a character, — one and the same thing, for characters are made visible by shadows, — and there is nothing on earth less dramatic than virtuous people.

"The Miser," "The Misanthrope," "The Liar," "The Jealous Man," "The Wicked Man," and "The Hypocrite" have been written, but these are subjects to which one may not return, and it would be just as stupid to touch up "Othello" and "Tartuffe." Man's passions and defects are not inexhaustible, and can furnish only a small number of combinations, which have already been reproduced a thousand times over. There are left, therefore, adventures, romance, fancy, the curious working out of style; for the drama of passion and the comedy of manners can neither interest nor amuse any one nowadays, when there are neither manners nor passion left.

The fact that knowledge is so wide-spread militates against the possibility of winning success with an historical drama, and Victor Hugo fully realised this. The best way to succeed on the stage is to surprise the spectator, but how is it possible to introduce surprise into

an historical drama? How can the spectator be led to tremble for this or the other hero, when he knows perfectly well that the said hero died quietly in his bed thirty years ago, after having made his will and received the last sacraments of the Church? How can he interest himself in the fate of a heroine whom he knows to have been hunchbacked and dropsical? So Hugo borrows from history names merely; from the age, its general colouring; from the country, a few local touches; and out of these he weaves a harmonious background for the action he intends to develop.

It might be better even if he used no names at all, and simply called his characters the Duke, the Queen, the Prince, the Princess, and so on. For my own part, I should like fully as well the old names, familiar through long usage, of Silvio, Leander, Persida, and Graciosa, that give to the plays in which they occur a delightful air of improbability. They would have the inestimable advantage of shutting the mouths of all those learned critics who never fail, at every new drama by Hugo, to ask, with their customary sprightliness: "Here is indeed Francis I; but where is Leonardo da Vinci? Where is Luther? Where is the Pope? Where is Caillette? Where is Charles V?

Where are all the people who lived in those days? And where is that glorious sixteenth century itself?" — Why, hang it, it is lying prone, between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, in its eternal shroud, in the bottomless depths of nothingness, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where Time, with its ever young old hands buries the ages that are dead! And I do not see what need there is, when one is talking of an historical character, to lug in all other contemporary historical characters. It is not absolutely indispensable that a drama should be a reproduction of Moréri's Dictionary. But, of course, a critic has to show that he has just been re-reading his histories and chroniclers.

I consider Hugo's dramas are sufficiently accurate. The scene is in Padua, Francisco Donato being Doge. That is all right. If it were in Trebizond, under the reign of Hassan, second of the name, it would be all right, too. The whole point is this: Were you moved? Did you weep? Did you shudder?

A quality which Hugo possesses in as eminent a degree as Anne Radcliffe and Maturin, is the power of producing gloomy and architectural terror, if such an expression be permissible. Angelo's palace is as fear-

fully mysterious a building as the Castle of Udolpho. There is another and unknown palace, of which it is but the outward casing and envelope. This looks like a wall; in reality it is a corridor. This dresser, so wonderfully carved, which Renaissance artists took delight in chiselling, is a door. Stairs ascend and descend in the interior of the pillars; the wainscotting hears and speaks; the tapestries shiver. If Hamlet were here, it is neither a rat nor a Polonius he would pink with his sword, but a sbirro armed with his poniard. Nay, Hamlet would not be so courageous in Padua as at Elsinore, or he might not venture: "There is a secret corridor, that perpetually betrays every hall, every room, every alcove; a sombre corridor the doors of which are known to others than you, and that you feel winding round without knowing exactly where it is; a mysterious sap wherein go and come incessantly unknown men busy about something." At night, one hears the sound of steps in the walls, and wonders whether one of the beautiful paintings of nude courtesans painted by Titian is about to swing outwards and to reveal a bravo who will have to be followed into some deep, dank place whence he alone will emerge.

There are all manner of masked entrances: secret doors that are opened by means of queer little keys. Here a button must be pressed; there a trap be lifted. Piranesi, the great Piranesi himself, the fiend of architectural nightmares, who knows how to round out the blackest of vaults, dripping wet, ready to crash down, who causes to grow amid the rubbish plants that look like serpents, and who twists so hideously the mandragora's misshapen legs between the cracked stones and the disjointed cornices, could not have attained, even in his most delirious and supernatural engravings, an equal power of opaque and stifling terror.

The churches are draped in black, a mass is being chanted, a stone in a vault is being raised, a grave dug for a living being. Behind the handsome brocade curtains, covered with rich embroidery, there is, instead of a bed, a rough wooden scaffold, an axe, and a sheet. Every room is sinister and uninhabitable in its appearance. The very chamber of Tisbe looks like the nave of some deserted church, and in vain does the figured silk drapery fall in dainty folds and its golden threads and flowers shimmer; in vain do the stage masks smile their best on the arm-chairs and the floor. Let the chairs do what they may, they resemble prie-Dieu, and

Rosamond's spangled dress is naught but a shroud forgotten by a phantom. The walls are painted a colour that will scarce show the splash of blood. It is plain that some one is to die there. It is a room delightfully convenient for a murder, and a most fit lodging for the dead.

To tell the truth, I do not believe that Catarina went out of it quite alive, and kind-hearted though Tisbe is, I would not swear that she did not mix a little of the contents of the black vial with those of the white. I think it is only friendly to advise Rodolfo to moderate his transports of joy.

The spy scene has been cut out bodily, but is to be put in again when the play is next performed. It takes place in a sort of cut-throat den, or inn of evil fame, which, it was feared, would prove too much for the sensitiveness of the occupiers of boxes at the Théâtre-Français.

I am not sure how far it is wise to break the fingers or noses off *bassi-relievi*, and to prune the dragons and monsters off a cathedral, but there it is; in the way of *bassi-relievi* the public's preference is for a smoothly planed board. A bough severed from a tree may possibly help to purify the air round the cradle, but it

makes a gaping wound in the bole, and leaves a white scutcheon upon it that is as hideous to look at as an ulcer.

I am not of those who believe that an idea can be withdrawn with impunity from any work. There is a piece of canvas in which there is a knot; the knot is pulled out, but along with it is pulled out the thread of which it is a part, and a tear is made the whole length of the warp. It is the same with ideas. If one be cut out of the first act, there are two in the second which become unintelligible, six in the third, and so on.

Every work is brought forth complete, either well-shapen or misshapen, with well formed legs or crippled; that is all luck. But it does not seem to me that to cut off the thigh because there is a club foot at the end of the leg is the way to make the limb shapely.

As for Hugo's play, it has legs as handsome as those of the Hunting Diana, and all that has been cut off from it is a few locks of hair, that fluttered too capriciously and too freely upon its white shoulders for the taste of the bourgeois of Paris done up in their stiff stocks; but the precious locks, fine and delicate as the loveliest silk, are to be found intact between the satiny pages of the printed book.

III

RACHEL IN "ANGELO"

MAY 27, 1850.

"ANGELO" is the only prose drama Victor Hugo has had performed at the Théâtre Français, but prose like that, so clean, firm, and sculptural, is as good as verse, of which it has the sonority, the brilliancy, and even the rhythm; it is just as literary and as hard to write.

I incline to the belief that all the effects of which prose is susceptible have not yet been availed of in the writing of plays. Almost all the masterpieces in our repertory are in verse, and the few exceptions that might be mentioned merely confirm the rule.

Molière's regular plays, those on which he reckoned, are in verse, and when he makes use of prose, it is with apparent reluctance and when hurried by the King's commands.

His "Banquet of Stone," or, to be more accurate, his "Stone Guest," which is, all the same, marked by its superb style, was later on put into verse by Thomas Corneille, and it is only in these days that it has been restored to its pristine form. For a long time prose was not deemed to be finished enough, difficult enough,

polished enough for presentation to the refined public of the Comédie-Française.

Marivaux and Lesage, who wrote in prose, were for this reason less highly esteemed by the connoisseurs of their day, although they belong to a comparatively modern time. Beaumarchais was the first to triumph with prose on a stage accustomed to the tragic melopeia and the rhythmic laughter of comedy, but then what wonderful prose it was that he wrote! Clever, wrought out, cut in facets, full of skill and of address, fruitful in unexpected resources, in acoustic tricks, in ways of bringing out a sentence, of making words flash, of making hits tell, of producing harmonious or abrupt effects! His skill is such that in certain passages not only does he attain to verse effects, but to musical effects as well, as, for instance, in the tirade on calumny, so that Rossini had merely to accentuate it a little when noting it, in order to make an admirable air for it. Beaumarchais goes so very far that he makes use of assonance and alliteration, and very often of the eight-syllabled blank verse.

Prose of this kind has all the qualities of verse, with greater freedom, rapidity and suppleness, and is probably the sort of tongue best adapted to the stage,

where it could take a place half-way between verse and ordinary speech. We lack on the stage, and it is a pity, the iambic verse of the Greeks and the Latins. We are forced to make use of the heroic verse. The hexameter, or alexandrine, to give it its modern name, although it has been admirably handled by great poets and rendered more flexible through prodigious metrical skill in these latter days, still retains a certain redundancy and emphasis. The ill-placed cæsura is too readily felt in delivery, and spoils the illusion. I do not mean that the difficulty has never been overcome; it has been overcome often and in the most brilliant manner.

If a player be skilful, he will obtain melodious strains from a reed, but a many-keyed flute is all the better. The English and the Germans enjoy great metrical liberty on the stage; Shakespeare starts with prose and ends, after using blank verse, with rimed verse. The Spaniards have the rapid romance octo-syllabic line with its slight assonance, which does not rime when it does not care to do so, or for the purpose of producing an effect. Prose, such as Beaumarchais and Victor Hugo have turned it out, the one for comedy and the other for drama, appears

to me to be quite capable of taking the place of the iambic we lack. This does not mean that I would banish verse from the stage, for although the way of life has turned me into a critic, I remember that I am a poet, and certainly I shall never for one disregard the charm and the rights of poetry; but I do think that there are subjects that can be wrought out more fully in prose than in verse, and that a different order of dramatic ideas would be better expressed by this means.

I was sure that Rachel would score a great success in the part of Tisbe, and that she would be quite at home in lines that are as solid as Corneille's alexandrines. Nothing could better suit her distinct, trained delivery and her deep accents than those sentences which ring on the ideas like brazen armour upon a warrior's shoulders, than the clean, firm, masterly style that projects like a bas-relief cut with a chisel. In her performance of the part of Tisbe, Rachel has made herself the queen of drama as she was already the queen of tragedy. Henceforth she will rule without a rival in the realm of Romanticism as she ruled of yore in the realm of Classicism.

The part of Tisbe, as is well known, was created by

Mlle. Mars. I have no very enthusiastic recollection of that performance, for, I confess it to my shame, that lady's talent never impressed me very much when she played the part. While I do justice to her undoubted qualities, I consider that she but imperfectly understood the character of Tisbe. She possessed in the highest degree commonplace distinction and vulgar good form, if it be not a cruelty to couple these words. She did not possess the high-bred air which may be lacking in a duchess and which is occasionally met with in a gipsy. Graces acquired through study are not the result of a fortunate temperament, but of the persistent exercise of will. It was plain that, like a banker's wife at an aristocratic reception, she was anxious to appear *comme il faut*. There was assuredly no fault to be found with her voice or her gestures, but she did not possess that easy, natural good form which is sure of itself and which forgets itself without ceasing to exist. In a word, she lacked breeding.

The part of Tisbe frightened her; she slurred it over instead of bringing it out; she tamed down the fierceness of it, thinking that by so doing she was making it stylish. She turned Tisbe into a lady who might have been presented in a drawing-room and who would not

have been out of place there. She made the fiery and capricious actress as prosaic as she could, in order that she should be proper. The whole picturesque side of the part disappeared; the costume itself did not exhibit the loud richness characteristic of a courtesan actress, who in private life still bears traces of the stage costuming, and by exaggerating it, avenges herself upon luxury for the shame with which she has to purchase it. Her dress was quite a decent, sober attire in the troubadour style: turbans and toques, epaulets on the sleeves, — a dress, in short, which might be worn at an evening party.

Now Rachel makes a great hit by realising the plastic ideal of the parts she plays. In "Phædra," she is a Greek princess of the heroic days; in "Angelo," she is an Italian courtesan of the sixteenth century, and she is so in a way that is quite unmistakable. No one can possibly take her for anything else, and no sculptor or painter could do better. She at once masters the audience by her imperiously true aspect. In tragedy, she seems to move out of a bas-relief by Phidias as she walks down to the front of the stage; in drama, she seems to emerge from a painting by Bronzino or Titian. The illusion is perfect. She is not only a great actress; she is first and foremost a great artist. Her beauty,

which the bourgeois do not understand, and which they are apt to deny the existence of while yielding to its sway, is amazingly varied. At one time she is like white marble, at another like a warm Venetian painting. She suits herself to the surroundings in which she is to move. Marvellously harmonised is her golden pallor with the pearls, the quillings, the gold sequins, the Cordova leather tapestries and the oak wainscotting. She is just the figure one expects to see in that room, and she stands out strongly from the background. She lives at her ease in that bygone age and makes one believe in the truth of the plot.

It is impossible to imagine anything more radiant, more sparkling, more splendidly indolent than Tisbe's dress as she moves about among the guests, holding in leash the podesta, who grumbles and growls like a tiger whose chain is being pulled too hard by the keeper. It is a true reproduction of the insensate luxury of artistic and debauched Italy in the days when Titian painted the mistresses of princes utterly nude, and Veronese flooded the white steps of terraces with silks, velvets, and gold brocades.

How gracefully inattentive is the air with which she listens to the complaints of the poor tyrant, always lead-

ing him away from the point he wants to make; and how admirably she delivers the tale in which she relates how her mother, a husbandless woman, who sang Morlacca songs upon the public squares, was saved by a sweet child that begged her life just as she was being led to the scaffold for having, it was said, insulted the most sacred Republic in one of her lays. How much feeling, how much emotion there is in the rapid, apparently careless delivery, in the telling, as if constrained and as if to fulfil a duty, to one who is unable to understand. And with what wondrous ease, alike of a great lady and an actress, she diverts the tyrant's suspicions and sends him back to tell Rodolfo that she loves him! It is impossible to be at once more of an actress and more of a woman.

Then, how wheedling, and at the same time — so that she shall not too plainly reveal her purpose — how indifferent is the grace she exhibits in the scene of the key, and in the great quarrel between the honest woman and the courtesan. How she does hold her victim between her teeth, and shake her, and slap her against the wall! Her fury is savage, her ferocity is implacable. She attains the greatest heights of irony and insult, and it seems that in the actress's voice is expressed the whole

sum of rancour long nursed by a proscribed and disinherited race, — that the female pariah is for once avenging herself upon the fortunate in this world, to whom the practice of virtue is so easy, and who nevertheless conceal a lover under their spouse's bed. The accursed race lifts its head and proudly enjoys the right to contemn its contemners, and to insult its insulters. It is the accused judging the judge, the tortured torturing the tortioner; and more yet, it is the courtesan trampling upon the decent woman who has taken her lover from her.

Never have I seen anything more grand, sinister, and terrible. I experienced the same sort of feeling of horrible anguish which one experiences in watching a tigress, with flaming eyes and outstretched claws, turning and twisting round a trembling, terrified gazelle. But when the crucifix makes her recognise in Catarina the maiden who saved her mother's life, at once her wrath vanishes, and you feel that she is disarmed. Later, again, when she realises that Rodolfo does not love her and never has loved her, how superbly she gives up life and harbours no other desire than to have him say now and again: "Tisbe! — yes, she was a kind girl."

It may be boldly affirmed that no one will ever play the part of Tisbe better than Rachel; she has stamped it with an ineffaceable mark. Every actress has in her repertory a part of this kind in which she has summed up her talent. Rachel has two: Phædra in tragedy, and Tisbe in drama. If any one desires to see all she is and can be, it is these two parts she must be seen in. Now that she has set foot upon Hugo's varied stage, she ought to try his Lucrezia Borgia and his Mary Tudor, in which she would find opportunities for successes no less brilliant. The superb female part in "Warwick, or the King Maker," a drama by Auguste Vacquerie, recently accepted by the Comédie-Française, is also very well cut out for her, and she would unquestionably be splendid in it.

IV

VICTOR HUGO AS A DRAUGHTSMAN

JUNE 17, 1838.

HUGO is not a poet only; he is a painter also, and one whom Louis Boulanger, Camille Roqueplan, and Paul Huet would not disavow for their sire. When he travels he sketches everything that strikes him. The ridge of a hill, a broken horizon-line, a strangely

formed cloud, a curious detail on a door or window, a ruinous tower, an old belfry, these are the things that he notes; then at evening, in the inn, he inks in his pencil sketch, puts in shadows and colouring, strengthens it, brings out an effect that is always boldly selected. Thus does the rough draft, hastily dashed off with the paper resting on his knee or on the top of his hat, often done while the carriage is jolting or the ferry-boat rolling, become a drawing much like an etching, with an amount of fancifulness and piquancy that surprises even artists.

The drawing I have before me is a souvenir of a trip through Belgium, and bears on the back the following title: *Lière (?), August 12: drizzling.*

It shows a square the architecture of which is partly Renaissance, partly Gothic, with an effect of storm-swoln clouds heaped up one above another, like pieces of mountains, while from their ripped sides falls a dash of rain, making them look like quivers that have been upset and from which the arrows are tumbling.

A belfry of prodigious height hides in the clouds its brow, on which it bears a coronet of finials and pepper-box turrets; a vane, in the form of a comet with its tail, whirls round at the breath of the storm on the

main spire. The action of the wind is accurately represented by the scud which is swept along in one direction only. A tawny, lustreless sunbeam lights up a part of the belfry, every architectural and ornamental detail on which is rendered with admirable cleverness, delicacy, brilliancy, and skill. The dial, whereon the figures are picked out in white, by scratching through to the paper surface, must have called for infinite patience and care from the fiery poet. At the foot of the belfry rises, on massive pillars, a market-hall, quaintly barred with black shadows, with imbricated slates like fish-scales, and dormer windows with dove-cot buttresses. Brilliant rays of light sparkle unexpectedly between the sombre pillars, that seem to have been designed purposely to afford hiding-places to Gubettas or Homodaïs. This is a very picturesque arrangement, which would form a fine decorative motive. Delightful houses in the Spanish Gothic and in the Flemish styles fill the back of the square. It is easy to recognise in this architectural drawing the hand that wrote the chapter "A Bird's-eye View of Paris," in "Notre-Dame de Paris."

V

FIRST PERFORMANCE OF "RUY BLAS" AT THE THÉÂTRE DE LA RENAISSANCE

NOVEMBER 12, 1838.

NEVER has any literary solemnity excited public interest so deeply, for it was not only the first performance of "Ruy Blas," it was also the first performance in the new theatre; and it was on that evening that was to be finally settled the question whether Frédérick would succeed in stripping off the hideous rags of Robert Macaire, which seemed to cling to his flesh like the poisoned shirt of Nessus. Strange indeed is the position of an actor who cannot be separated from his creation, and whose mask, having been kept on too long, has become a part of his features.

"Ruy Blas" has solved the problem. Robert Macaire is no more, and from the heap of rags has uprisen, like a god starting from the tomb, Frédérick, the real Frédérick, the one you are acquainted with, sombre, passionate, the strong, the grand Frédérick, who knows how to move with tears, to thunder in menace, who is endowed with the gifts of voice, glance, and gesture, the Frédérick of Faust, of Rochester, of

Richard Darlington, and of Gennaro, the greatest comedian, and the greatest tragedian of modern times. It is wondrous good fortune for dramatic art.

I wish all possible success to the new theatre, which has been fairly started on the road of art and progress, and which, I hope, will not have been called the Renaissance Theatre for nothing. There was a speech by Méry and a drama by Hugo. Excellent; so go on, but above all give us no prose. Give us verse, verse, and again verse. Prose should be left to the Boulevard shops. Employ poets, not mere playwrights, for there is no need of opening a new stall for the productions of these people, and it is only right that fancy, style, wit, and poesy should have one little corner in which they may come to the light in this vast France, which boasts of being the most intellectual country in the world; in this Paris of ours, which proclaims itself the brain of the universe, though I really do not know why. Surely eighteen theatres ought to be enough for melodrama and vaudeville.

VI

REVIVAL OF "RUY BLAS"

FEBRUARY 28, 1872.

As I had been present at the first performance of "Ruy Blas" at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, on the occasion of the opening of the house, there was for me, in this long promised revival, and apart from the interest it naturally excited, an undefinable, sad attraction.

In "Mary Tudor," Hoshua Farnaby, the jailer of the Tower, says to Gilbert: "Look here, Gilbert; when a man has become gray-haired, he should not review the opinions for which he fought formerly, or look at the women he made love to when he was twenty. Both the women and the opinions strike him as very ugly, very old, very mean, very toothless, very wrinkled, very stupid." This is no doubt true of opinions and women, but not of works of genius. They can stand being looked at again, for they possess immortal youth. The years, as they pass over the bronze or marble of which they are made, merely add the final polish and patina to them. "Ruy Blas" seemed to me as beautiful as the first time I saw it, if not more beautiful even.

In spite of the lapse of time I felt myself carried away, as when I was twenty, by the mighty rush of passion; I was desperately in love with the Queen, and with Ruy Blas I climbed over the high wall bristling with iron spikes in order to fetch her the little blue German flowers gathered at Coramanchel. Don Salluste, Satan turned grandee of Spain, filled me with the same sense of oppressive terror, and Zafari, the jolly Bohemian who had once been Don Cæsar de Bazan, excited in me the same impulsive sympathy. I experienced anew the fresh impressions of my youth, and the dormant Romanticism that is ever in me woke up again, ready to enter once more on "Hernani" battles; but of these there is no longer need. No one now questions Victor Hugo's title to be a dramatic poet, and he has compelled the most recalcitrant to admire him.

No first performance of a yet unknown work ever excited more ardent curiosity. I need not say that the interior of the theatre upset the mathematical axiom that the container must be larger than the contents, for, through one of those phenomena of compressibility of which the human frame is susceptible on such occasions, there were certainly more spectators than there were seats for them.

It might be supposed that the eagerness was due, not to literary attraction only, but also to political preoccupations. It is true that, though the poet ever was disdainful of success won by allusions, "Ruy Blas" does contain a number of lines which an opposition may turn to account against no matter what government, for they express truths that are always timely, — the commonplaces, as it were, of eternal justice.

Well, no sooner had the first few lines been spoken than all thoughts of the kind vanished. The poet had got hold of the public, and with one stroke of his mighty wings had borne it far from the realities of the moment into the lofty spheres of art. Not even was there felt that spirit of antagonism between two rival schools which, at the first performance, caused some anxiety to his admirers. The play was listened to with religious respect, as though it had been the "Cid," "Don Sancho of Aragon," or any other recognised masterpiece, criticism of which is no longer allowable.

There were very few survivors left of that earlier public which was present at the performance in the Théâtre de la Renaissance. Thirty-four years have elapsed since that night, and I looked in vain in the boxes for the faces that I had known of yore. I could

scarcely make out five or six, that smiled at each other from a distance, happy at meeting again at such a feast of poesy; they formed a public of posterity for "Ruy Blas."

It was Frédérick Lemaître who, as will be remembered, created the part of Ruy Blas, and before the curtain rose people wondered whether he would succeed in stripping off the hideous rags of Robert Macaire, which seemed to cling to his flesh like the poisoned shirt of Nessus. But Ruy Blas quickly overcame Robert Macaire. The effect, needless to say, was tremendous, and the way in which, in the third act, Ruy Blas crushes Don Salluste under his heel, as the Archangel crushes the Fiend, is yet fresh in the memory of all those who saw it.

Frédérick still lives, but his genius lacks power, or youth rather. The old lion is still capable of shaking his mane, and of drawing a deep roar from his chest; he can still drive out the ministers and slay Don Salluste, but he can no longer throw himself prone at the Queen's feet on the steps of the throne. Nevertheless, if "The Burgraves," a Titanic work worthy of Æschylus, were revived, there is no actor who could compare with Frédérick. What a magnificent Job,

what a superb Barbarossa he would make! How admirably he would play the part of the patriarchal bandit, or that of the phantom Emperor.

Of all Victor Hugo's dramatic works, "Ruy Blas" is one of those which I like best. Note that I say which I like best; for there are others that I admire just as much.

The component parts of the work fit into each other with an accuracy that does not allow the points of junction to be perceived, for the plot moves easily along, in spite of its being complicated and involved. The subject is one that excites the imagination most intensely, and which may be found in every youthful heart in the form of an unspoken longing, — to emerge suddenly from obscurity by a piece of good fortune that seems like magic, and to fly swiftly upwards towards ideal, radiant, sublime love; love in majesty and omnipotence, which is the nearest thing to being a god on earth — in a word, to be the lover of the Queen.

The intoxication, the bewilderment, the vertigo consequent on reaching such heights are mingled with constant apprehension of unperceived disaster. In the floor, which seems to conceal no snare, may suddenly

open a trap-door through which the victim will be precipitated into a darksome abyss. From a secret opening may perhaps emerge, silent, icy-cold, implacable as Hatred or Vengeance, the diabolical Don Salluste, who, putting his hand on the unfortunate man's shoulder, strips off him the skin of Don Cæsar de Bazan and leaves him in the presence of the Queen with naught but his lackey's livery. What a tragical, what a moving situation! To help — in spite of one's self, and without knowing what to do, driven by inexorable fate — to set the trap prepared by the demon for the adored angel, while one feels confusedly its formidable complications working in the gloom!

Every one of the characters is drawn and painted like a portrait by Velasquez, with sov'ran mastery, power of colour, freedom of touch, and a grandeur in the attitudes and a feeling of the times that carry one away. How often I have seen that Marquis of Finlas at the Prado, at the Escorial, at Aranjuez, either him or some one of his race, in a frame with a coat of arms, rich, dressed in black, with eyes like live coals set in his deathly white face. Many an hour have I spent in silent contemplation of pallid Infantas,

of bloodless Queens, of dead women turned phantoms, having no other trace of life, in the silvery luminousness of the drawing-rooms and under the shimmering of pearls, than the carmine on their lips and the spots of rouge on their cheeks! The whole of picaresque Spain lives once more in the amazing character of Don Cæsar de Bazan, which is in Hugo's work what the sparkling Mercutio is in Shakespeare's. How elegant he is even in his rags, and how well he wears them! What loftiness of mind in poverty, and what terrific and philosophical forgetfulness of vanished prosperity! How loyal, scrupulous, and proud, amid all his disorders, that Count de Garofa, later de Villalcazar, the friend of Matalobos and Gulatembra! And Don Guritan, grotesque rival to Ruy Blas; what a fine type of old Spanish gallantry! He is Don Quixote come to Court, with the Queen for his Dulcinea de Toboso!

But why dwell longer on what is so well known? Rather let me draw attention to the fact that never was dramatic life managed with such sovereign ease, with such absolute power. A poet may express everything, from the most lyrical effusions of love to the minute details of etiquette, heraldry, and genealogy;

from the highest eloquence to the riskiest pleasantry, passing from the sublime to the grotesque without the least effort, and mingling every accent in the most magnificent language that was ever spoken on the stage. Molière's plain speaking, Corneille's grandeur, and Shakespeare's imagination, melted in the crucible of Hugo, amalgamate into a Corinthian bronze that is superior to all other metals.

Although an old critic is usually *laudator temporis acti*, and considers that comedies, tragedies, and dramas were better performed in the days of his youth, I am bound to say that the revival of "Ruy Blas" at the Odéon was superior, as regards acting, finish and setting, to the first performance, save and except so far as Frédérick is concerned, for he cannot be replaced by any one.

Lafontaine, in the part of Ruy Blas, neither sought nor avoided perilous remembrances, and gave what was in him: unexpected outbursts, cries that came from the heart, accents that were true in spite of incoherence and grandiloquence. In the scene in the first act, when he tells Zafari of his love for the Queen, his delivery was very good; he was magnificently violent and superbly angry in his famous invec-

tive against the ministers, and the declaration of love which follows was breathed with really well rendered timidity of adoration and passion, while at the end the lackey was implacable in the way he avenged himself upon the nobleman.

As for Geoffroy, he is the very ideal of the part. The poet could not have conceived in his imagination a more icy, more impassible Don Salluste; one more void of human feeling, more profound, more satanic, in a word, under the outward appearance of a nobleman. Every one of his words cut like an axe and made the back of one's neck creep. Alexander Muzon was far indeed from attaining such perfection.

The part of Don Cæsar de Bazan seems to call irresistibly for Mélingue: the escudero cloak has been slashed and cut into holes on purpose for him; the pummel of the shell-hilt rapier is made to his hand; the drooping feather is meant to flutter upon his beaver. Who is there that could, better than he, swagger round with triumphant mien, his cloak up his neck and his hose wrinkling down his legs? And all the sparkling nonsense, the happy hits, that flash across the sombre background of the drama like Roman candles against a dark sky! Mélingue had no difficulty

in making those who still remembered the original Don Cæsar forget Saint-Firmin.

Atala Beauchêne, who played the part of Marie de Neubourg at the Renaissance, was considered weak in it, in spite of her beauty. But there could be no more suave, charming, and poetic Marie de Neubourg than Sarah Bernhardt at the Odéon. What languid sadness is hers! what an air she has of an ill-mated dove that is stifling for want of freedom and love in the gloomy gilded cage wherein she is shut up by the mummified incarnation of etiquette, the camerara-mayor! Never has the gloomy, suffocating ennui of the Spanish Court been better rendered. How chaste her reserve, even when owning her love! How womanly her discretion! How truly the Queen in her always guards the woman who loves! How truly she is made to be worshipped, and how clearly the little silver-lace crown on top of her head makes her look like the Madonna of love!

Fabien showed us Don Guritan, the old fighting beau, in the light of a high-bred and attractive character. His costume, of a tender hue, braided all over and covered with ribbons, contrasted comically with the tall, thin, stiff, longitudinal figure, which recalled that of a young heron. Ridiculous as he looks, he

loves the Queen and would die for her. Ruy Blas was not mistaken in that.

Mlle. Broisat is the sweetest Casilda that could possibly lighten the gloom of the Spanish Court and counterbalance the soporific influence of a camerara-mayor. And while I am on the subject of the Duchess d'Albuquerque, let me say that Mlle. Ramelli, in her black bodice, is irritatingly truthful in her dragon's part; every time she pulls the thread to stay the flight of some fancy or other, one feels tempted, like the Queen, to box her ears soundly.

Mme. Lambquin assumed, without the least coquetry, the part of the hideous duenna, with pimples on her chin and grog-blossoms on her nose. She seems to have looked for her costume and the type she was to represent in Goya's *Caprichos*, among the wizards of the College of Bozozona, the *tias* of the Rastro, and the duennas with huge chaplets who, in church porches, ask you for alms, first for an old woman, and then for a young one.

VII

REVIVAL OF "MARION DELORME"

NOVEMBER 9, 1839.

I DESIRE to put on record the success which the revival of "Marion Delorme" is meeting with just now at the Comédie-Française. It is superfluous at this time of day to sing the praises of the play. A run of eighty nights and three successive editions are better than any panegyric. This beautiful drama unites in itself the passionate seriousness of the great Corneille and the mad spirit of Shakespeare's romantic comedies. It is infinitely varied in tone; most delightful and Castilian in its vivacity. How admirably all those handsome lords who merely pass through the play to flash their swords and exhibit their wit, speak the proudly cavalier tongue of the sixteenth century! How truly comic an accent there is in it! Pray, pray take Taillebras, Scaramouch, and Gracioso. Why, Scarron himself, the author of "Don Japhet of Armenia" and of "Jodelet," could not have dashed them off more freely and vividly. And Marion's tears! How limpidly they stream, divine pearls of repentance, over all those grimacing or dreadful faces! What a charming Mar-

quis is that naughty fellow Gaspard de Saverny! And what a manly, severe, foredoomed face is that of Didier, sprung from nothing! "Marion Delorme" is one of Hugo's plays to which one turns back with the most pleasure. It is a novel, a comedy, a drama, a poem, in which every one of the cords of the lyre is struck in turn.

VIII

REVIVAL OF "MARION DELORME"

DECEMBER 1, 1851.

LAST Friday "Marion Delorme" was revived at the Théâtre de la République. That great and beautiful drama, already consecrated by time, has become as classical as a tragi-comedy by Corneille or Rotrou, for all that it was so Romanticist at the time when it was first produced. Though still a living drama, it has taken its place in the gallery of masterpieces which the Théâtre-Français presents for study to the younger generations. It was listened to with religious respect both by those who were acquainted with it and by those who were not. It is scarcely possible to imagine an actress better fitted for the part of Marion Delorme, of the repentant courtesan, than Mlle. Judith. She

has the youth, the beauty, the intelligence, the passion, the tears, and the smiles it calls for. If, in some of the deeper and more pathetic passages she does not do so well as Mme. Dorval, on the other hand, she brings out other points in the part and lights it up differently.

Jouffroy does not play the part of Louis XIII, he lives it; he is Louis XIII in person, the king who reduced ennui to an art, almost to a form of voluptuousness, and who forgot to take his crown from the brow of Melancholy. It is impossible to be more lack-lustre, more gloomy, more dull, more regally overwhelmed with royal weariness as with a leaden cope lining the ermine mantle, the weight of which was felt by none more heavily than by that same pale Louis, not even by Philip II at the Escorial, or by Charles V at Saint Just.

Brindeau made the character of Saverny ironically eloquent, and Maillard reproduced satisfactorily the passionate, woe-begone, and foredoomed aspect of Didier, the type of all the Antonys.

IX

"LUCREZIA BORGIA" AT THE ODÉON

March 13, 1843.

"Lucrezia Borgia" has been revived at the Odéon, and that gigantic drama, which reminds one more of Æschylus than of Shakespeare, has produced its customary effect. Mlle. Georges showed herself sublime in it, as usual, and never, since it was first created, has the small part of the Princess Negroni been interpreted more gracefully, with more beauty, wit, and youthfulness. It was Mlle. Volet who was charged to draw into the snares of the too vindictive Lucrezia Gennaro's over-trustful friends, and it will readily be believed that they did not have to be asked twice before they followed her.

Strange indeed is Lucrezia's fate! Celebrated by all the poets her contemporaries, sung by the divine Ariosto, who set her up as a model of all the virtues, she has a double reputation: to the poets she is an angel; to the chroniclers, a fiend. Which of these have lied? She was fair, and had the gentlest face imaginable. Lord Byron relates that he found in a library in Italy, I forget whether in Ravenna or Ferrara, a collection of

autograph letters of Lucrezia Borgia's, between the pages of which had been inserted a lock of her hair. The letters spoke of platonic love, of idealised tenderness; the hair was soft, pale, and silky, like the beams of an angel's halo.

The great poet abstracted a small portion of it, which he carried away and preserved carefully. Now that woman has become the type of Titanic wickedness, just as, thanks to Vergil's slanders, Dido, the most repellent, the most dried-up prude of her day, will live for ever as the type of love and passion.

X

"LUCREZIA BORGIA" AT THE PORTE-SAINT-MARTIN

FEBRUARY 7, 1870.

IN 1833 I was present at the first performance of "Lucrezia Borgia," a fact I have no intention of concealing with a view to making myself out younger than I am. I will even confess that I was a member of the deputation sent to Victor Hugo by the Romanticist school, which objected to fighting for a prose drama, a concession it looked upon as made to the bourgeois; for we fanatics, who may appear ridiculous to the

present generation, were proud of art and had a genuine love for the highest forms of poetry. The reading of the play, however, which produced a tremendous effect, swept away all scruples, and the hosts of "Hernani" pledged themselves to stand by "Lucrezia Borgia;" although, as it turned out, this was unnecessary, for the play scored a triumphant success.

So I have seen Gennaro played by Frédérick Lemaître, and Lucrezia interpreted by Mlle. Georges. You need not shudder; I am not going to take a mean advantage of my remembrances, and I shall not sing the praises of the past, like Horace's old man, *laudator temporis acti*, or Nestor, the good knight of Gerennia, who lauded the men of former days as being so much better and stronger than those of the present. Perhaps I am, after all, nothing more than an old Romanticist dolt, as Théodore de Banville used to say of himself, but as I should not like the fact to become too apparent, I shall avoid as much as I can any senile drivel.

The public that was present at the revival of "Lucrezia Borgia," new, so far as seeing it performed went, to the greater number, was filled with a very different spirit from that which inspired us in 1833, for times change and men with them. It was not the art ques-

tion which interested it most, but I tried to isolate myself from my noisy yet calmer surroundings, to put aside my former impressions, and to judge the play as if I were seeing it for the first time.

Well, after the lapse of so many years, filled with so many unforeseen events, such contrary doctrines and varied changes of taste, "Lucrezia Borgia" produced on me as great an effect as at the first performance, and indeed a greater effect. At that time, intoxicated with lyricism, mad about poetry, I appreciated less completely the drama itself and its scenic situations; now, it is precisely dramatic force and strong situations that distinguish the first prose play of the poet who wrote "Hernani" and "Marion Delorme." Powerfully effective as the drama is, it is also wonderfully simple in its construction. It consists of three leading situations, fully developed and forming admirable tableaux superbly drawn and painted, that resemble three colossal frescoes set in slender Renaissance architecture. They are grasped at a glance and the impression they make is ineffaceable: *Outrage upon Outrage — The Couple — Dead Drunk.* These are the titles, at once sinister and quaint, which the poet has inscribed upon cartouches with curving volutes, underneath these magical pictures

grim and sombre in their splendour. What can be finer than the scene upon the terrace of the Barberigo Palace in Venice, when Maffio Orsini, Beppo Loveretto, Don Apostolo Gazetta, Ascanio Petrucci, and Alofeno Villetozzo, whose families each and all mourn some murdered one, cast in the teeth of Lucrezia Borgia, whose mask they have torn off, every one of her crimes, and by way of crowning insult fling her name in her face? It is an astounding crescendo of insults. No poet, since Shakespeare's day, has sounded more powerfully the "hideous trump of curse." There is a reminiscence of the epic grandeur of Æschylus in that scene.

The Couple represents with terrifying truthfulness the private life of a pair of tigers. They have exactly the same treacherous gracefulness, the same velvety sneakiness, the same tremendous strength concealed by suppleness and softness of motion. As one watches the male and female prowling up and down, as though in an Indian jungle, within that palace filled with traps, snares, and oubliettes, in which all that is necessary is to rap on the wall to bring forth a cut-throat with his blade in his hand, or a cup-bearer bringing in vials of poison, one is involuntarily filled with secret terror. These

two huge felines, that have for a moment escaped from the menagerie of history, have a monstrous beauty of their own, the savage character of which has been wonderfully brought out by the poet.

When, after having in vain been all smiles and sweetness, and uttered hypocritical sighs, Lucrezia shows her claws and in her rage roars again in her natural voice, cold shivers run up and down one's back, and one dreads seeing the tigress spring from the stage into the auditorium, as at a performance of Van Amhy's or Caster's. She is defending her cub to the best of her ability against the stern, implacable ferocity of Don Alfonso of Ferrara, her fourth husband.

What shall I say of the tableau: *Dead Drunk?* — of the supper at the Princess Negroni's, an elegant Locusta in the service of the Borgias, who had the art of attracting the rose-crowned victims to these death feasts, and to smilingly present the poisoned cup to them? How sinister is the chant of the monks as it mingles with the refrains of the orgy, and how fully the spectator shares the terror of the guests when the great doors swing open and reveal five coffins in a row, standing out against the black hangings with the silver cloth cross upon them, and Lucrezia standing on the

threshold, her arms crossed, filled with satisfied pride at having so well wrought out her cowardly vengeance, which every Italian in the sixteenth century would have admired as a work of art! "You gave a ball in my honour in Venice; I pay you back with a supper in Ferrara," are words that superbly sum up the whole play.

The other and connecting scenes are carried out with masterly simplicity, without any little tricks, and go straight to their end like lanes that lead to open squares by the shortest cut. But at the corner of these lanes there always is a curiously traceried turret, a porch with statues, a balcony with interesting iron-work. Even in the least visible parts of the play art is ever present, as it was in the Italian cities of that day.

In my opinion, — and it is merely a question of stage machinery — some of these scenes ought not to be detached, as they are at present, and made into tableaux, but introduced by a simple change of drop-scene. The play would be benefited by this, and these scenes would not be rendered more important than they really are; but in France there exists a superstitious horror of such changes in view of the spectators, though Shakespeare has made large use of them.

At the first performance I came to the conclusion that the prose of the play had as much artistic value as the finest verse, because of its firmness, its cleanness, and the fact that it is brightened up by strong touches and endowed with rhythm in view of the conflict of dialogue, and does not need, in order to reach the spectator's ear, the brazen vases that were placed on the stage of antiquity. I am still, thirty-seven years later, of the same mind. No more magnificent language has ever been heard on the stage. A few of the younger generation affirm that it has aged. No doubt; aged like a painting by Titian or Giorgione, which time has covered with a golden veil, making the lights fairer, the tones warmer, and the waves of a yet more mysterious depth.

It is known that this terrible woman, whom her contemporaries thought charming, was fair. Lord Byron possessed a lock of Lucrezia's hair, which had been forgotten in a love letter, and that was the colour of ruddy gold. Mme. Marie Laurent has conformed to this tradition. It is not necessary to have hair black as ink in order to be terrible. Lionesses are tawny.

There is this difficulty in the part of Lucrezia, that her maternal love having to remain unconfessed, it

often assumes the appearance of love itself. Its accents deceive Gennaro; they deceive Giubetta; they deceive the Grand Duke of Ferrara, but they do not deceive the spectators. They are in the secret; they know full well that Gennaro is the son of Lucrezia and of that Giovanni Borgia who was cast into the Tiber by the man on horseback seen by the Ripetta boatman, and whose sombre story is told by Beppo Loveretto at the beginning of the play. This subtle distinction is the more difficult to maintain that Lucrezia indulges in no monologue for the purpose of stating what she knows better than any one else, that she makes use of Giubetta without confiding anything to him, and that she yields up her secret only in the supreme explosion at the end, when she cries to Gennaro, with the death-rattle in her throat, "I am thy mother!" This difference was delicately and thoughtfully rendered by the actress. She was very fine in the great curse scene, when she falls smitten to the earth by the anathema the avenging lips hurl at her, or rather by the overpowering grief arising from the thought that henceforth she will be despised and hated by Gennaro. Her wheedling ways with the Duke, in the second act, were perhaps a little bit overdone, and it would have been well not to

lay so much stress on her secret designs. When she beseeches Gennaro to drink the antidote, and he refuses, remarking that perhaps it is the real poison, she makes a superb gesture of unrecognised probity revolting against injustice. She howled the fierce ironies in the third act with amazing depth of satisfied hatred, and in the closing scene she proved both touching and pathetic, making one forget the poisoner and pity the mother.

Why did Taillade, who had to represent a young captain of fortune, an Italian of the days of the Borgias, crop his head quite close after the English fashion, so as to look like Kemble in the part of Hamlet? I cannot understand this strange fancy, which unjustifiably alters the appearance of the character. Taillade, having often been blamed for playing in too nervous, too jerky, too jumpy a way, now affects a cold and sober manner; he scarcely indulges in a gesture, and no longer allows himself to be carried away by the rush of the play. It is true that Shakespeare says to the players: "Do not saw the air too much with your hand," and that he forbids them "tear a passion to tatters, to very rags," but he also advises them thus: "Be not too tame neither; suit the action to the word, the word to the action." If Taillade, whose talent I

much appreciate, would let himself go more, he would be all the better. Gennaro, in spite of his mysterious destiny, ought to be more frank and confiding than he makes him.

Mélingue is the most admirable Don Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, that can be conceived. He has a lordly and princely mien, quite the port of a portrait by Bronzino; and when he says, "The name of Hercules has often been borne in our family," he looks worthy of bearing it himself. Under his slashed silk sleeve there plainly is concealed a muscular arm capable of handling the sword. He is a man of the kind the age brought forth: a bandit-hero, a tyrant, a lover of the arts, a gallant and courteous poisoner, a deep politician, and worthy of being admired by Machiavel.

XI

FIRST PERFORMANCE OF "THE BURGRAVES" AT THE THÉÂTRE-FRANÇAIS

March 13, 1843.

Of yore, on the edge of the cliffs that bristle on the banks of the Rhine, rose cloud-wrapped, inaccessible donjons inhabited by burgraves, bandit-noblemen, Homeric robbers, who took ransom from passers-by,

pillaged convoys, and then returned to their eyries with their booty held fast in their talons. Smashed open by assaults, broken down by time, cracked by the invasion of vegetation, the tall towers of the deserted strongholds are falling stone by stone into the stream, or menacingly overhang the abyss in monstrous fragments. The heroic bandits in their armour of plate have been succeeded by thieves and swindlers; cunning has replaced force, and it is the hotel-keepers who now rob travellers.

In his admirable "Letters from the Rhine," Victor Hugo, with his unequalled descriptive powers, took us through a number of the ancient feudal lairs, every part of which he is acquainted with — the guard-rooms, the cellars with their elliptical vaulting, the winding staircases, the secret passages cut in the thickness of the walls, the oubliettes, their floors strewn with dead men's bones, the cone-topped look-outs, hung on the crenellations like swallows' nests, — he showed us everything and led us through every room and hall, and into every story.

No doubt it was while he was exploring one of these donjons that the idea of "The Burgraves" occurred to the illustrious poet. First, he must have

reconstituted in his mind the ruined parts; set the fallen stones back in their places; fastened the chains to the drawbridge; restored the fallen floors; torn down the ivy and parasitical plants; replaced the stained-glass panes in their lead setting; cast an oak trunk or two in the gaping mouth of the fireplaces, placed here and there in the window recesses a few carved wood chairs. Then when he saw that everything was rearranged and set right in the lordly manor, the fancy must have seized him to recall its former inhabitants, for like the witch of Endor, a poet is able to call up ghosts and to make them speak. Hatto must have come first, then Magnus, his father, then Job, the grandsire, the circle widening and growing backwards through time. It is this vision of vanished years which Victor Hugo has realised and cast in magnificent verse, the result being the trilogy of "The Burgraves."

When the curtain rises and allows the spectators to look into the imaginary separated from the real by the dazzling line of fire called the footlights, there is seen the keep of Heppenheff, one of those lofty, scarped, inaccessible feudal strongholds that cling to the rock with talons of granite, clusters of towers

engaged one within the other, walls resembling cliffs to the point of deception, and of which those who have not visited the keeps of the Rhine may form some idea by looking at the ruins of Château-Gaillard, near les Andelys, on the banks of the Seine. Clouds rest upon the battlements, and the hawk in its swoop tears its wing against the spearheads of the sentries; the moats are abysses, in which foam far below in a bluish haze the boiling waters of a torrent, and it is courting dizziness to bend out of the narrow loopholes.

There is no communication with the outer air, not an opening in that stone panoply which the old burgrave Job the Accursed puts on over the iron panoply he never lays aside. Job the Accursed, Job the Excommunicated, is a sort of centenarian Goetz von Berlichingen, a Titan of the Rhine, who means to die as he has lived, without yielding obedience to any law or to any master; he has resolutely kicked down the imperial scaling-ladder set up against his walls, and to show that he is in open revolt against society he has hoisted a great black flag upon his highest tower.

The vast dilapidated hall, over which the dust of neglect is cast, where damp turns the stone-work green and the busy spider weaves its webs upon the broken

mouldings, is the lordly portrait gallery of the Keep of Heppenheff.

At the back, through the semicircular arches of a Romanesque gallery, blaze the blood-red, lowering hues of sunset. The lower story of the gallery consists of short, squat, stout, massive-looking pillars with fanciful capitals; the second, of lighter pillars set more closely together. Through the openings of the arches are seen in perspective the summits of the ramparts and of the other towers of the castle. Lights are already gleaming from the barbicans, whence come bursts of strident clarion blasts and noisy refrains of drinking-songs. Hatto, the youngest and the most wicked of the burgraves, is feasting with his companions. The revel, begun in the morning, looks like lasting a good deal longer, for the guests are not inclined to cut their enjoyment short. Amid the insolently joyous resonance of the revel is heard at times the sinister sound of heavy steps and of leaves brushed aside. It is the slaves returning from work, driven by a soldier, whip in hand.

Assuredly if ever a man might think himself safe within his den, Count Job may do so. The portcullis is down, the drawbridge up; the archers are watch-

ing at their posts: the Count's chamber, its door studded with huge nails, and locks with complex secret wards, is itself a fortress within the outer fortress; the slaves are securely ironed; the prisons are of unknown depth and never yield up their prey. What, then, has the old Prometheus to fear on this rock? Naught, save a vulture, sent by Jupiter, swooping down from the heavens.

Yet a foe has managed to penetrate within the well defended manor, in spite of ramparts and sentries. Do you see that old, worn woman, sad beyond all expression, with the cold, gloomy look of a spectre, her two heels sounding on the stone pavement as she walks like the heels of the Commander, her harsh, strange name, her sinister, mysterious ways? She is Hatred and Vengeance; she is Guanhumara, a poor slave who has been bought and sold a score of times, who has tugged at the boats that ply between Ostia and Rome, and who, ever changing masters and climes, has lived for sixty years a death in life. In the course of her many sufferings and of her wandering existence, she has learned wondrous secrets; terrifying tigers even, she has gathered in the mighty forests of Ind powerful herbs that bestow life or in-

flict death; during the long Polar nights, when the stars shine in the heavens for six months at a time she has meditated upon the secret properties of stars and philters, she has conversed with the spirits of darkness, and slowly matured her plan of vengeance, a plan that Satan himself could not improve upon. She wanders through the castle, every nook and recess of which she is acquainted with, every subterranean passage in which she has explored; for, in return for the surprising cures she has worked, she is allowed a certain amount of liberty. In the breasts of her companions in misfortune, she inspires vague dread and superstitious terror, and ever as she walks there is a great void around her. Now while she crouches, surly, silent, and sombre, in a corner, the prisoners are talking together of the mysteries of the keep, and whisper among themselves words the very echo of which terrifies them.

Guanhumara has been seen in the graveyard, her sleeves rolled up, preparing a horrid mixture with bones of the dead, the while muttering a dread incantation. A light has been seen glimmering in the window with the torn iron bars, that looks out upon the abyss, and down which a trace of blood goes to the waters of the

torrent. It is a window that lights a cellar the entrance to which is now unknown. In that mysterious recess dwells a phantom.

"Dread and mysterious are the times we live in; filled with strange events. Everything is tottering and falling into ruin. Violence, murder, and pillage rage unchecked. It was not so in the days of Barbarossa. Ah! were he only alive now, he would know how to punish the insolent burgraves. — But he is not dead for ever, says one of the captives. There is a prediction that runs thus: 'Twice shall Barbarossa be believed dead, and twice shall he come to life again.' Count Max Edmund saw him near Lautern, in a cave in the Taurus, above which swoops round unceasingly a whirling flock of crows. He was seated on a brazen chair; his long white eyelashes came down to his cheeks, and his beard, once ruddy gold, now snow-white, went three times round the table on which he was leaning. When Count Max Edmund approached, Barbarossa opened his eyes and asked if the crows had flown away. 'No, Sire,' answered the Count; and the phantom-Emperor went to sleep again. — All that is but a piece of folly, a yarn, an old wife's tale, mere nonsense. Barbarossa was drowned in the Cydnus, in sight of the whole

army. — His body was never found, though. — Who knows? says another one of the company, less sceptical than his comrades. The prophecy has come true once; why should it not come true a second time? I saw long ago, in the hospital at Prague, a Dalmatian nobleman called Sfrondati, who was shut up as being insane, and who told the following story: During his youth, he was a squire in the household of Barbarossa's father, who, dreading the predictions that had been made at the boy's birth, had intrusted him to another son, a bastard he had had by a girl of noble rank, to be brought up under the name of Donato. Duke Frederick had concealed his real rank from the bastard, lest the latter's ambition should be aroused, and when he confided his legitimate son to him, he merely said: 'This is your brother.' When Donato was twenty, the two brothers quarrelled about a Corsican maid with whom they were both in love. The elder brother thought he had been treacherously dealt with, and slew the younger, as well as Sfrondati; at least he believed he had killed them. On the banks of a torrent, shepherds picked up two blood-covered bodies, stripped naked, which had been cast up by the waters. They were those of Sfrondati and Donato, who were still

alive; they were restored to health, and Sfrondati hastened to take Donato back to his father. The affair was hushed up; Fosco disappeared and fled to Brittany, from which he did not return till very many years later. As for Sfrondati, his mind had given way, and he was sensible at rare intervals only. Duke Frederick, desirous of keeping the affair quiet, had him shut up. No one knew what had become of the Corsican girl, who had been sold to bandits or corsairs. When he was on his death-bed Frederick sent for his son and made him swear on the cross not to seek to be avenged upon his brother before the latter was a hundred years old; that is, never. No doubt Fosco had died without being aware that his father Otho was Duke Frederick, and his brother Donato the Emperor Barbarossa."

Such, roughly, is the tenor of the conversation between the slaves, merchants, citizens, and soldiers; each man putting in a word and a rime with a skill and in an unexpected way characteristic of the conversations Victor Hugo writes down, and which in the modern drama take the place filled by the chorus in the tragedy of antiquity.

When the captives have finished their stories, the soldier-keeper cracks his whip and drives them before

him, for my lord Hatto and his company are coming to visit this portion of the castle, and their eyes must not be shocked by the sight of these wretches.

It is not often that the young burgraves venture in this direction, for it is here that Magnus and Job have made their den. The darksome stair leads to the rooms they inhabit. Within there, Job sits in state under a dais of gold brocade, with his son Magnus at his side holding his lance. They remain silent and motionless for months at a time, sunk in deep thought. They keep thinking of their exploits, of their crimes, it may be, for at bottom they are downright bandits, and if they are free from the effeminate vices of decadent periods, they have their full share of the ferocious roughness and the brutal coarseness of primitive times. They are men of iron, wearing naught but iron; their dressing-gown is a coat of mail; they live in their panoplies, and as they move about the steel clinks and clashes. Hatto and his friends, on the other hand, find it more convenient to dress in silks and velvets, to spend their lives in prolonged feasting, to crown themselves with flowers, to indulge in amorous dalliance with their beauteous slaves, and to leave the rough work to be done by subordinate brig-

ands, who have been trained like dogs or falcons to retrieve the prey. They prefer the clinking of glasses to the clash of swords, and perhaps, notwithstanding their heroic ancestors, they are not far wrong.

The captives having withdrawn, there comes on the scene a pallid, white-clad figure. Is she a vision? An angel strayed into this tiger-cat's den? She leans with one hand upon her maid, and rests the other upon the arm of the free archer Otbert, a handsome young fellow of twenty who loves her and is loved by her. She sits down, or lets herself fall, rather, in an arm-chair by the richly coloured stained-glass window, which she has opened in order to look out over the country-side; for the last time, it may be, for she is dying of consumption. The tomb yearns for her lovely frame, and the angels are calling her pure and gentle soul. Millevoye made himself famous by writing a few lines of verse on this subject, but these disappear in the presence of this scene between Regina and Otbert as vanishes the moon's pale light before the rays of the sun. No poetry more ravishing, more tender, more sad, more amorously scented with the perfumes that air exhales from its urn, ever caressed a human ear. Otbert's love expresses itself in lyrical effusions of in-

comparable ardour and tenderness. "Thou shalt live!" he exclaims in passionate accents of love, when the young girl in her dismay utters a cry of sublime despair, as she feels that life is leaving her and that she is too much loved to die just yet.

Otbert goes to Guanhumara, for does she not hold the keys of life and death in her hands? Guanhumara cannot refuse to grant him life for Regina. Besides, there exists some mysterious bond between Otbert and the sinister hag. He was stolen by her when a child, and she has brought him up for the fulfilment of a formidable and terrible project. Indeed, not to keep the reader in suspense, I shall say at once that Otbert is none else than George, a child born to Job in his old age, when he was past fourscore, like the true patriarch he is. The devilish old wretch seized the child when it was playing on the sward, and bore it away concealed in her rags. She has brought him up with a horrible purpose of murder and vengeance, for she means to punish fratricide by parricide. Of course, if it were merely a matter of killing Job, in whom the reader has already recognised the assassin of Donato, there would be no difficulty about it, for Guanhumara has at her disposal a whole pharmacy of poisons: hen-

bane, euphorbia, and the juices of the manchineel and the upas-tree. But that sort of thing would be too mild, too simple, and not Corsican enough.

Otbert says to her, "Can you save Regina's life?" — "I can; but what do I care whether she dies?" — "As for me, I would buy her life back at the price of my soul, if Satan would have it." — "Is your mind quite made up? Then look at this vial. Let Regina drink one drop of its contents every night, and she will live. But if you want me to give it you, you must swear to slay, when I will, where I will, whom I will, without pity or mercy, — to slay like an assassin or an executioner." — "I swear I shall do so."

The bargain is struck, and Guanhumara draws from her sash a small vial. That blackish liquor is the quintessence of life, health, and bloom. Really, Otbert is not paying too high a price for it.

A faint puff of wind again bears in the sound of songs and clarions. It is Hatto advancing, followed by his joyous company, glasses in hands, roses on heads. Their conversation is exceedingly animated, for the two barrels of scarlet wine annually paid by the town of Bingen to Count Hatto have been pretty freely broached. Every man is telling of his exploits, and of

his successes with the fair — the telling takes time. The one boasts of having sacked a place, another of having forsworn himself on the Holy Gospels, and numerous other peccadilloes of the sort. But while these fellows are chattering, the donjon door has opened, and a sight meets the gaze. First comes Magnus, dressed in buff and steel, with a great wolf-skin thrown over his shoulders so that the head and mouth form a helmet. His hair and beard are streaked with gray, and he leans upon a huge Scottish pole-axe; though aged, he is plainly of colossal strength and his muscles are unconquered. On the upper step stands another figure, older, bald-headed, with veins prominent on the temples, and a long white beard falling down like a cascade upon a chest as powerful as that of Michael Angelo's Moses. It is Job, formerly known as Fosco. By his side stand Otbert and a squire bearing the red and black banner.

Hatto's companions are too much engaged with their own sayings and doings to notice the arrival of Job and Magnus, who preserve granite-like silence until one of the guests boasts of having forsworn himself. Then Magnus speaks, and breaks out into one of those magnificent apostrophes, common in Victor Hugo's work,

upon old German loyalty, on the difference between the oaths sworn and the clothes worn of yore and the oaths sworn and the clothes worn at present. Formerly all were steel, now they are nothing but silk and imitation; neither oaths nor clothes endure.

The young burgraves pay but scant heed to the speech, for they are well used to the Homeric allocutions of their grand-parents. The young Count Lupus starts a song: —

"Cold is the winter, fierce the blast;
On mountain tops the snow is alling;
But let us love, for what care we?
For what care we? So let us love.

"Myself I 'm damned; my mother 's dead;
The priest is ever at me preaching;
But let us love, for what care we?
For what care we? So let us love.

"Satan himself at my door knocks,
Outside with all his friends he 's waiting;
But let us love, for what care we?
For what care we? So let us love."

While Lupus is singing, the others, bending out of the windows, are throwing stones at an old mendicant who appears to be begging a night's refuge. "What!"

cries Magnus, emerging from his torpor, "is that the way to receive a mendicant who begs, a guest sent by God himself? In my day we too were crazy-headed, we too were fond of prolonged repasts and songs, but when a poor wretch came along, cold and hungry, a helmet was filled with money and a cup with wine, and they were both sent out to the old man, who went on his way rejoicing, while the orgy proceeded apace, free from remorse and care." — "Silence! young man," says to Magnus the centenarian burgrave. "In my day, when we sang louder than even you, and when we feasted round a mighty board on which were served, upon golden platters, oxen roasted whole, if a beggar came to the castle gates, we proceeded forth to meet him, the trumpets sounded, and the old man was given the seat of honour. Stand back! ye children! Squires, go and fetch the man. And you, trumpeters, sound a blast as for a king!"

Job's orders are carried out, and soon appears in the redness of the sunset, framed in within an arch of the gallery at the head of the stairs, a pilgrim with torn mantle, dusty sandals, and a beard that falls to his waist. The trumpets send out a second blast, and the curtain falls upon this tableau, one of the grandest,

one of the most epic, ever seen on the stage, and to which there is no parallel for sublimity of conception and execution save the insult scene in "Lucrezia Borgia."

At the beginning of the second part, the old mendicant delivers one of those beautiful poetic monologues in which Victor Hugo sums up, in some threescore lines, the condition of a country and the character of an age. He excels in the making of these bird's-eye views, in which are represented in distinct and real forms the whole of the events of a whole century. When one has reached his topmost thought one's head turns with vertigo, as it does at the top of a cathedral spire. It is a maze of pillars, buttresses, counterforts, a complication which at once astounds and drives one to despair. To emerge from such a labyrinth, one must be at the least a Charlemagne, a Charles the Fifth, or a Barbarossa. And indeed the mendicant, received with royal honours by Job, is Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in person. This oration on transcendental politics, couched in verse of Corneillian beauty, is joyously broken in upon by the entrance of Regina, the bloom of health on her cheeks, her eyes shining with moist light, her lips wreathed with smiles. Guanhumara's

philter has worked, and the pallid girl, so white, so translucent that she might have served for the alabaster statue that was to be put on her tomb, has suddenly returned to life and happiness, recalled by the sov'ran drugs of the old witch.

Otbert is so radiant with happiness that he has almost forgotten the dread condition imposed by Guanhumara. But as she has kept her promise so must he keep his; else, by means of a second philter, the hag may plunge back into the gloom of the tomb the smiling face she has just snatched from it.

As for Job, he is supremely happy, for he has not been so blind, as he sat in his great ancestral chair, that he did not note the glances exchanged between Otbert and Regina, and their hearts speaking in their smiles. He sees that the young couple love each other, and he resolves to unite them in marriage. Besides, a secret sympathy draws him to Otbert; the young fellow's clean, proud brow and firm look please and delight him. Otbert looks just as he, Job, looked when he was twenty, as his son George, stolen in early childhood, would look now, had he not been sacrificed by the Jews upon one of their sabbath feasts. Otbert has no idea who were his father and mother, but that does not matter in the

least, for is not he, Job, himself a Count's bastard and the son of his own works? The difficulty in the way is that Regina is betrothed to Hatto. So time must be gained. Otbert and Regina shall flee by a secret postern of which Job hands them the keys, and the old man will take charge of the rest. The lovers are ready to flee, their eyes filled with joy and a heaven of happiness in their hearts; but the fiend is there, in the shadow, sneering and gnashing its teeth; Guanhumara, clinging in a dark corner as clings a bat with the claws on its wings, has heard every word, and goes to inform Hatto that Otbert is carrying off his bride. Hatto dashes in, raging with fury. Otbert pours out his contempt for him, challenges and insults him. Hatto, however, kicks away his glove, taunting him with being an impostor, a slave and the son of a slave. "You are not Otbert the archer; you are called Yorghi Spardacelli. I shall have you driven out with whips by my kennel grooms. I will not fight with you. If any one of these lords chooses to take your part, then I accept a duel with him on the spot, in this very place, with any weapon, with two daggers and bared breasts." The mendicant, who has watched the scene with suppressed indignation, calls out, "I shall be Otbert's champion!" — "This is

buffoonery! After the slave we tumble on the mendicant. Who are you that you dare put yourself forward?" — "I am the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and here is the cross of Charlemagne!"

This sudden revelation fills the whole assembly with terror.

"Barbarossa," says Magnus; "if you be indeed he, I shall soon recognise it. Let me see your arm. It is true; there is the mark of the triangular steel with which my father branded you. My lords, I declare that this is in very truth the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa."

The Emperor, his identity being established, breaks out into the most violent reproaches; he takes each burgrave to task, and tells him plainly what he is, with tempestuous, terrible eloquence, thunders and blasts that recall the wrath of the heroes of the Edda. The boldest tremble and bow their heads as they listen to the lion-like roars uttered by the old Emperor, indignant at so much cowardice, treason, and rapine. Alone Magnus remains head up, for his hatred is storming louder than Barbarossa's wrath even. The burgraves, emboldened by his example, begin to close in upon Frederick in an ever narrowing and more threatening ring. The giant is on the point of smashing the Emperor's sword into

flinders with his huge pole-axe, when Job the Accursed, who so far has taken no sides in the quarrel, draws near Magnus, puts his hand on his shoulder and says, as he sinks on one knee: "Frederick is right; he alone can save Germany. Let us yield."

Barbarossa, once more master of the situation, settles everything as he pleases, gives orders, sends some of the burgraves to the frontiers, condemns others to restore what they have seized upon, sets the captives free, and loads with the chains these are relieved of, the guiltiest among the burgraves. "And now, Fosco, go and wait for me in the place to which you repair every night," whispers Barbarossa to the old burgrave, who remains thunderstruck, for no one nowadays calls him by that name, — all those that ever knew it lying within the tomb.

In the third part the scene is the secret cellar, a terrifying and lugubrious place, with troublous echoes, and depths full of darkness. Through an opening grated with bars, three of which are twisted and partially pulled out, streams in a pale moonbeam that casts on the opposite wall a shroud-white mark. Job is seated, leaning on a large stone, by a small, flickering lamp that sputters in the damp, and merely serves to

make the blackness more intense. He is mourning over his fall; for he, demi-god of the Rhine, inflexible rebel, old mountain-eagle, has at last been vanquished. He recalls all the events of his life; he thinks of Donato, of Ginevra, of George, his lost son, of his incessant remorse and despair. To his sombre lamentations the echo replies obstinately, "Cain!" The echo is Guanhumara, who slowly comes forward, quietly terrible, for her vengeance is assured. She surges up in front of the burgrave, who, for the first time in his long life, shudders as he sees her. She makes herself known to him in a short, broken tale, in the course of which she briefly recapitulates the circumstances of the crime that was perpetrated within the secret cell. "And now, listen: your son George still lives. I it was who stole him away and bred him up to serve my vengeance. The son shall slay the father; a parricide for a fratricide is surely fair. George is Otbert; I have made a bargain with him: I recalled Regina to life on condition that he should put to death the victim I would point out. The life I restored to Regina I can take back, and this makes me sure Otbert's resolve will remain firm." — "And Otbert knows that he is about to slay his father?" —

"No; remain veiled; that is the only favour I grant you."

Staggering steps are heard in the depths of the underground room; it is Otbert coming, dismayed, stumbling, to fulfil his fatal promise. Then occurs an admirable scene in which hearts are kept on the rack and tortured, and which compels the driest eyes to shed tears. Never has any one made paternal love speak as here has done the author of "Autumn Leaves," "Notre-Dame de Paris," and "Lights and Shadows." Job refuses to die before he has embraced his boy; he pulls off his veil, throws himself into the arms of Otbert, who is himself torn by terrible forebodings, and while he swears to him that he is not his father, lavishes on him the most fatherly caresses. "Slay me; you may not allow your Regina to die. Besides, you think I am to be venerated, but I am a guilty man, a Satan. Be the avenging angel; strike without fear; I slew my own brother!" Still, Otbert, notwithstanding Job's eager entreaties, hesitates to perform the functions of executioner.

Guanhumara, seeing that his purpose is wavering, approaches and says: "Regina cannot wait longer than fifteen minutes." Otbert, beside himself, springs

forward knife in hand, but his arm is seized by Barbarossa, who suddenly emerges from the shadow, and says: "Ginevra, your vengeance would be useless. Donato is not dead, for I am he. Fosco, when you held me suspended over the abyss, you whispered in my ear words that no other living soul could hear: 'The tomb for thee; and hell for me!'" Fosco falls at his feet moaning for pity and forgiveness. Barbarossa raises him and presses him to his heart.

Guanhumara, or Ginevra rather, now disarmed, fully resuscitates Otbert's betrothed, and as her life's purpose is gone for ever, she swallows the contents of a small vial and falls down struck suddenly dead by the poison. And she is right; for what doth it advantage her, when a woman has become old and repulsive, to find again the lover she adored when she was twenty? What is the use of replacing a lovely phantom, a remembrance instinct with grace and bloom by a hideous reality?

This summary, which I have made with all the respect due to a great poet's work, is, though long, yet very incomplete. I should have liked, but it was an effort beyond my powers, to have reproduced some traits of these grim giant figures, whose violent forms,

terrible motions, and gait of angered lions, recall the illustrations drawn by the famous German painter Cornelius for the story of the Nibelungen. It is even doubtful whether I am capable of praising as it deserves the firm, clean, robust, familiar, yet grandiose versification that betrays the sovereign poet, as Dante hath it. At every instant one comes upon magnificent lines that bear one upward into the highest realms of poetry as with the swift rush of eagle's wings. It is marked by a variety of tone, an ease of rhythm, a facility in passing from the tender to the terrible, from the sweetest of smiles to the deepest terror, such as no other writer has ever possessed to a similar extent.

On this occasion, the public proved worthy of the masterpiece that was being performed before it. It listened, with the respect that beseems the inhabitants of the modern Athens, to the work of its greatest poet, not interrupting the action on account of risky detail or comparative oddity. And indeed never had such an assemblage met together to listen to a man's work. Everything that Paris, the brain of the world, holds in the way of learning, intelligence, passion, celebrity, and fame was met there. Literature, arts, the drama, politics, banking, fashion, beauty, every form of aristocracy,

were represented. Every box contained at least one renowned guest. Just at this time there is no one but Victor Hugo who can excite to such an extent public attention and curiosity. Whether people are favourable or hostile to him, they feel compelled to make themselves acquainted with his works. A drama from his pen is always an event, and affords food for discussion; he alone can make literary quarrels take the place of political debates.

It would be very easy, no doubt, — and there will be plenty of critics to undertake the task, — to fall foul of the poet on account of some detail, an entrance or an exit, but that matters little; it is mediocre minds that invariably excel in such petty fault-finding. For my part, I like the shocking beauties well enough, and I am quite willing to put up with a little oddity, barbarism, and bad taste, even, if these lead me on to certain unexpected and superb lines that make every true poet prick up his ears as the blare of bugles makes the war-horse do. Victor Hugo possesses one quality, the greatest and the least often met with in art: power. Whatever he touches acquires vigour, energy, and solidity. Under his mighty hands contours come out sharply defined; there is nothing vague,

nothing soft, nothing left to chance. He has the violence and harshness of style characteristic of Michael Angelo; his is a virile genius, — for genius has sex: Raphael and Racine were feminine geniuses; Corneille a manly one. No one comes so close to the grim grandeur of Æschylus; there are tirades in Job's part that would not be out of place in "Prometheus Bound." Guanhumara's imprecations, when she calls all nature to witness her oath of vengeance, constitute one of the finest passages in our literature; they are filled with the breadth and the soaring poetry of the tragedy of antiquity, which is a very different thing from the classical tragedy:

"O ye mighty heavens! O ye sacred depths!
Sombre serenity of the azure vault!
Light so mournful in thy majesty!
And thou, which in life's exile I ne'er have dropped,
My chain's worn link and comrade true,
I call ye all to witness now! Ye walls, ye citadels,

"Ye oaks, cool shade on travellers all bestowing,
My words ye hear! By this avenging steel shall fall
Fosco, baron of the woods, the rocks, the plains,
Sombre as thou, O night, aged as you, ye giant oaks!"

What marvellous power was needed thus to evoke the whole of a vanished time that has melted away

into the night of the doubtful past, to reconstruct a world of granite inhabited by giants of brass, to rebuild stone by stone, as patiently as a mediæval architect might have done, the inaccessible and formidable keep, with its walls pierced by the windings of darksome passages, its cellars full of mystery and terror, its old family portraits, its panoplies that give out strange sounds when the breeze rustles over them, and which seem to be still inspired by the spirits of those they protected! What power of realisation was needed to mingle thus the phantoms of legend and natural beings, and to put into imperial and Homeric mouths speeches worthy of them! Hugo alone could at this day maintain the epic tone, the lyric flight throughout three acts.

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF POETRY

IT is claimed nowadays that it is the easiest thing in the world to write verse; that everybody writes verse, and very fair verse at that; that every schoolboy has composed a volume of Melodies, or Harmonies, or Desolations, or Revelations, or Preludes, or Essays, or other Miscellanea that are more or less insipid. It would be just as true to say that everybody is clever, which is another statement very generally heard, and which explains why it is that one reads and hears nothing but inanities.

It is not easy to write verse. There are uncommonly clever, uncommonly learned people, or to use the slang of the day, great hearts and great stylists, who have never succeeded in turning out properly a distich or a quatrain. In addition to a flow of ideas, a knowledge of the language, and the gift of imagination, there is needed a certain inward sense, a secret tendency, something which cannot be acquired and which is part of the individual's own temperament and idiosyncrasy.

Science always ends by opening the gates of its sanctuary to whomsoever knocks at them often enough, but poetry, music, and painting are of a prouder disposition and yield to picked minds only. I do not mean that a man can become a great artist without working, but I do mean that close study, which will make a scholar of a man, will not suffice to make an artist of him.

That is why arts are superior to sciences; they require, in addition to the knowledge acquired by study, a natural gift, a sort of instinctive intuition that nothing on earth can take the place of, and which is not to be found in any academy or market. As a general rule, I have no great opinion of scientists; but I feel the deepest veneration for a real artist; I admire him as I would admire a beautiful woman or a happy man. Genius, beauty, happiness, a radiant trinity, magnificent gifts which God alone can bestow, which are beyond the generosity of kings and which the most persistent efforts of human will fail to acquire.

A truth which prose-writers in vain endeavour to conceal under the Oriental splendour of their style is that they are unable to write verse. The poet, on the contrary, can write in prose whenever he chooses to condescend to such a job, and he turns it out in a won-

drously wrought out perfection that no prose writer can approach. A singer can speak, but an orator cannot sing. Birds both fly and walk; horses, however spirited and proud their gait, can run only, and the gallop of the finest English race-horse does not come up to an eagle's flight. The poet's double nature partakes of that of the hippogriff; there is no creature on earth or under heaven that can surpass him in running or in flight; the spread of his pinions is greater and his flight through the azure ether more powerful than that of the condor or the roc of fable, while his foot, lighter treading than even the light-footed Camilla's, scarce causes the blades of grass to bend.

In proof of this, I name an illustrious name, a name famous and admitted to be so by all alike, the name of the patriarch of modern literature, that of Chateaubriand. Unquestionably, if ever any man on earth was endowed with the gifts of epic grandeur, of movement, of warmth, of passion, of splendour, of mighty imagery, and of all the lofty poetic attributes, that man is the author of "The Martyrs," of "Atala," and of "René." Never did a prose writer bear closer resemblance to a poet, and as one reads the glorious pages of "The Genius of Christianity," involuntarily the thought occurs

that they would be easy to turn into beautiful verse; all they lack is rime.

Writers of newspaper articles and utilitarian bathos, and other small-minded men, who believe themselves to be accurate and judicious because they are sterile and colourless, unjustly run poets down. Whenever it pleases the poets to do so, they can compose newspaper paragraphs far superior in range and style to anything the aforesaid gentlemen have produced of most astounding; they can write on politics without having recourse to the rhetorical figures that alone form the eloquence of these would-be Montesquieus.

Poets are fit to do other things besides riming in verse, although I fail to see what better a man can do than write good verse. The prose of these fellows is not equal to theirs, and the whole pack of scribblers put together could not turn out a single one of the poets' strophes; their contempt is too closely akin to that of the fox that had lost its tail. And really I do not see any other explanation of the bitterness of critics towards poets.

It is true that a grand, broad style, flowing along like one of the mighty American streams bearing flowery islets upon its slow and harmonious current, is so like

poetry that it may well be mistaken for it. The waves of limpid, sonorous sentences make one think of the divine words that abounded in Homer's mouth, as André Chénier, the Greek poet, says. The periods are metrical and cadenced, with suitable rests and falls; they are almost blank verse. But to be quite verse, for the book to be quite a poem and the speech a song, rime alone is still wanted. Nothing, a mere nothing; three letters, two even, at the end of each line! Not much, is it? Barthélemy, separated from his Siamese twin Méry, writes three hundred lines of verse a week; if he were asked, he would just as readily write six hundred.

Yet Chateaubriand, with all his Biblical, Homeric, *chivalric*, and royal talent, has never been able to join on properly these three unfortunate letters to the end of his sentences, and has tried in vain to add that barb to the epic javelins he shoots from his silver bow, like unto that of Apollo Smintheus. Chateaubriand has, *proh pudor!* written badly rimed verse, hard, flabby, prosaic, inexact, grandiloquent, pretentiously artless, verse worthy of a provincial academy!

In many places his tragedy, "Moses," recalls Baour-Lormian's "Omasis" and Ducis' "Abufar," and not-

withstanding the Oriental profusion of camels, gazelles, and palms, is Biblical in name only. Verse is to Chateaubriand what sun spots are to the sun; the sun is none the less the sun and Chateaubriand Chateaubriand. Yet the spots are spots and bad verse is bad verse, even if Phœbus or God Himself had written it; so that I believe it may be said, with all due respect to his splendid renown and his mighty talent, that Chateaubriand, the great poetic prose-writer, is an execrable and ridiculous poet.

Jules Janin, frightfully wasteful though he is of his talent, and none the less one of the most distinguished literary men of the day, has been more fortunate, or else more prudent, than Chateaubriand. He has never been able to write verse; at least I am unacquainted with a single line of verse from his pen. When he needed a few stanzas for one of his novels, he simply asked his friends for them: Frédéric Soulié, the dramatist, or Barbier, the writer of iambics. Yet Jules Janin, whose prose is flowing, rhythmical, coloured, diapered with images, seems to have every requisite of a poet, but the pearls he scatters freely are not pierced and cannot be strung together on rhythm's golden thread.

George Sand, the hermaphroditic writer whose novels are so highly poetical, introduced into "Lelia," which is a grand ode, a hymn entitled *Inno Ebrioso*, which, in less pretentious language, means "Drinking Song." This hymn, or song, as the reader wills, is simply detestable. It is attributed by some to Gustave Planche, but this is merely begging the question, for Gustave Planche, in spite of his characteristic dryness and severity, is a distinguished writer of prose and a critic of very fair taste, and knows better than any one how bad verse is not written, even if he does not know how good verse is written. Every one remembers, too, what happened when the great mysticist, Edgar Quinet, the singer of "Ahasuerus," took to riming in order to make his aureole complete.

Examples to the contrary are very numerous. Hugo, the poet who has written "Odes and Ballads," "The Orientals," "Hernani," and "Marion Delorme," the man who has come nearest to Corneille and who is unquestionably the greatest of French lyrical poets, writes a prose that is not less beautiful than his verse, sculptural and marked by firmness and vigour unsurpassed by any other writer; he passes with equal facility from the lyre to the pen, from the pen to the lyre. His

prose sentences are as fine as his verse, due allowance being made for the material with which he works, for diamond must always be superior to crystal. Diamond scratches crystal, while crystal cannot make an impression on diamond, although it is apparently of as fine a water, as limpid, and sparkling with equal beauty.

Lamartine writes eloquently and easily in prose; the author of "Joseph Delorme" and "Consolations" is known for his carefully wrought out and delicately trenchant sentences. Alfred de Vigny wrote "Cinq-Mars," which is quite as good as "Eloa." Musset's prose comedies exhibit exactly the same freedom, insolent elegance, and witty fancifulness which are met with in his "Tales of Spain and Italy."

I might carry this comparison a good deal farther and quote many another name, but I fancy these are sufficient, and more than sufficient.

Even granting that fine prose is as good as fine verse, which I deny, is the overcoming of difficulties not to count for anything? I am well aware that there are plenty of people who claim that difficulties should not be taken into account; yet what is art, if it be not the means of overcoming the obstacles nature puts in the way of the crystallisation of thought? And if it is

easy to overcome obstacles, what becomes of merit and glory? So I claim for the poet the highest throne in the Olympus of the superiorities of human thought. An absolute poet who should reach the most inaccessible degree of perfection, would be as great as God, and it may be that God is simply the greatest poet in the world.

OF THE UTILITY OF POETRY

IT is agreed on all hands that ours is not a poetic age, that books of poetry are unsaleable, and that a man must be either mad or a clodhopper if he write verse. Every review of a book of poems must necessarily begin with lamentations or complaints. Besides, critics are not very fond of poets, and they are still less fond of verse. It is of course quite an advantage to depreciate what one does not understand; it makes one so respectable and gives such a high idea of a man's merit, for there are still people simple enough to be taken in by these high and mighty airs, and very few think of requesting these newspaper foxes to turn round and show their tails. It seems to me that the objection that there is no sale for verse is quite unimportant and fails to prove anything against its excellence. The finest things are neither saleable nor purchasable. It is a matter for congratulation that neither love, beauty, nor light are to be found in shops. For the matter of that, there is no book which finds a

sale; the members of the upper classes do not blush to hire books which their footmen scarcely venture to bring back even when they have put on two pairs of gloves; greasy volumes, stained with oil or tallow, smelling of the counter or the kitchen, every page bearing the imprint of unwashed thumbs, and the stupid or obscene remarks of some would-be wit or literary police officer. It is perfectly shameful. Beautiful, high-bred ladies, whose lovely, slender-fingered hands, with rosy nails, have never touched anything coarse or rough, fearlessly handle and turn over the pages of those horribly dirty things called the latest novels. Of a truth, it would not be out of place to have finger-bowls after reading as after dinner. In England it is ladies' maids alone that patronise circulating libraries; if their betters want a book, they take down the publisher's name and address and send and have it bought. No one there would have on the table a single one of the vilely filthy volumes that disgrace tables and shelves in the richest of French drawing-rooms.

This state of things is doubly hurtful both from a hygienic and from a literary point of view, for it cannot be denied that, thanks to circulating libraries, the

part once played by the Hotel de Rambouillet is now played by the denizens of the kitchen. It is cooks who form the greater number of the patrons of circulating libraries, and the remaining portion consists of janitors' wives, though their taste is, as a rule, less choice, and they themselves do not by a long way exercise as much influence. If verse is not saleable, it is because the cooks, who in this respect are like the critics, cannot bear it, because it is too frivolous and lacks coherency. For my own part, I share the opinion of a young poet, who writes charmingly in prose: "Blasphemous it may be, therefore I whisper low that verse, language immortal, beyond all I love. To madness I love it; for in this 't is favoured, that never in any age have dolts understood it; that 't is God-given, limpid, and beauteous, and while the world hears, it speaks it not."

And whether verse sells or not, whether the age be poetic or not, the fact remains that the number of poets goes on increasing day by day.

For, no matter what may be said or done, there will always be poets. The need of expressing his thoughts in rhythmic manner is ingrained in man, and in every literature verse has come before prose, although the

contrary process would seem the more natural one. Before the invention of printing and the propagation of writings there were poets only. The inflexible form of verse, not a single syllable in which may be altered without destroying the harmony completely, was more deeply impressed upon the memory and preserved more faithfully what was intrusted to it. A distich was passed from mouth to mouth a score of times without any change or interpolation being made in it, which would assuredly not have been the case with a sentence in prose, no matter how artistically it might have been composed. In addition, the pleasure derived from harmony and from the overcoming of difficulties is very real and very great. All the utopists with their fine jargon, all the palingenesiacs, mystagogues, and other dabblers in neologisms and bad French, may howl as much as they please against poets, they will never prevent any one making love and dove rime. When it comes to choosing between useless things, or foolish things, it is best after all to choose poets. Watt, the inventor of the steamship, is very far indeed from being as great a genius as Homer the rhapsodist. The Chinese, the masters of porcelain and old lacquer, who, under their strangely diverse exterior conceal such ex-

quisite sense and such deep philosophy, fire guns at steamers, on the ground that these are a barbarous and indecent invention. And they are right, for a steamer is prose, and a sailing-vessel poetry. Is not the steamer, black, massive, built throughout of iron, without pendant or ensign, without the great white wings that swell so gracefully in the breeze, with its furnace and its iron pipes that belch forth fetid smoke, — is not the steamer, hideous to look at, but going far and fast, carrying a large amount of freight and drawing little water, and manned by blacksmiths and not by sailors, exactly like prose, which is always ready to convey whatever you please, wherever you please, safely and quickly, and also cheaply? And is not the sailing-ship, guided by the brain and not by a machine, awaiting the breath from on high in order to start, — is not the sailing-ship, covered with canvas high and low, breasting the sea like some giant swan, and binding to its shining sides a festoon of silvery foam, the perfect symbol of poetry? The sailing-ship looks like a flying bird; the steamer, chumping through the water with its paddles, looks like a drowning dog or a wind-mill carried away on top of a flood. As I am naturally

tolerant, I consent nevertheless that literary drummers and commercial bagmen, whose time is so precious, should take to the railway and carry their samples and their idiocy from one place to another as rapidly as they may, but for Heaven's sake, give us leave to stroll quietly along as our thoughts lead us, by the bank of streams, through mead and copse, now stopping to pluck a daisy wet with dew, now to listen to the blackbird's song, deserting the highway for remoter paths, and doing just as we please. Write prose as much as you like, but let others write verse; plant potatoes, but do not pull up tulips; fatten geese, but do not wring the necks of nightingales, and remember that stout Martin Luther familiarly remarked that he who loves not wine, women, and song is a fool and will be a fool to the end of his days. In spite of all your pretensions you are imperfect, and can understand one side of man only. You fancy that happiness consists in properly cooked beefsteaks and sound electoral laws. I think highly of both these things, but comfort is not enough; every select organisation must have art, must have beauty, must have form. That is the garment God has woven with His own hands to cover the world's nudity.

Unhappily this is no new debate, and this is not the first time that mathematicians, on reading Racine, have asked: "What does this demonstrate?" No one can expect the deaf to enjoy music, and the blind may chatter at their ease on the superfluity or non-existence of colour.

CIVILISATION AND THE PLASTIC ARTS

THE IDEAL OF BEAUTY IN ANCIENT AND IN MODERN TIMES

ARTISTS often complain of the ugliness of modern civilisation. According to them, the Beautiful, a product of the civilisation of antiquity, has not survived it, and, save for the period called Renaissance, which was a reaction in the direction of Greek and Roman ideas, the feeling for form has almost completely disappeared from this earth.

I shall not here enter upon lengthy æsthetic dissertations upon the meaning of the word Beautiful, which is a thing more easily comprehended than demonstrated. I shall be content with Plato's definition: The Beautiful is the splendour of the True.

Civilisation, which sprang up in India, traversed Egypt and settled in Greece. It manifested itself first by a monstrous, multiple symbolism, that next assumed hieratic stiffness, and was brought back to the types of taste by the eminently artistic Hellenic race.

CIVILISATION AND PLASTIC ARTS

Civilisation acted as does nature, which invariably passes from the complex to the simple, from the misshapen to the beautiful. The notion of a god with an elephant's trunk and polyp-like arms, precedes the Jupiter of Phidias just as the mammoth precedes the horse.

Economy of material and harmony of lines, that is the end aimed at by perfection. To make much out of little is the object of nature, and should be that of art.

Greek and Latin antiquity, with its anthropomorphistic polytheism, possessed in the highest degree the feeling for form; the human body, under which the gods were represented, became the object of positive worship; statuary attained to the highest degree of splendour, and in this respect, to the shame of progress be it said, it may be affirmed that art has not advanced one step for more than two thousand years.

There are many who go so far as to believe that it has retrograded.

Now, is it true that from the point of view of the Beautiful modern times are inferior to the times of antiquity, as is maintained, and in any case, what can be the cause of such a degenerescence?

The substitution of Christian for pagan ideas appears to me to be the primary cause of this degradation of form.

Formerly the human body, set up as the type of the Beautiful, as being the highest development of the configuration of matter, was the ideal regulator of artistic conceptions. And, indeed, the mind cannot imagine a more perfect form than that of man. The Greeks referred everything to this prototype, which assumed, in their hands, the most harmonious proportions; architecture, ceramics, were inspired by its lines, and the poet could say of the Propylæa that their outline bloomed "as with the beauty of a human smile."

The pillars of the Parthenon offer to the caress of the glance the graceful curves of a maiden's form, and the amphoræ recall, in their handles, the arms of women raised above the head to loosen the hair or upbear a basket. The merit of the Greeks in poetry and art is that they ever preserved human proportions. As they tended to this ideal, the purest and surest of all, they easily attained to Beauty, and transformed matter into a really divine thing.

Christianity, which sprang from Essenian and Jewish doctrines, was far from experiencing the same passionate love for form. The Hebrews, as is well known, proscribe images — that is the plastic arts — under the pretext that they conduce to idolatry, and the Jewish

element is far more powerful in Christianity than is generally believed. The early Christians were almost all iconoclasts, and the exploits of the martyrs almost invariably begin with the smashing of a Venus or an Apollo.

Yet, in the Catacombs, there are to be seen Christian mosaics and frescoes which borrow, though awkwardly, the traditional processes of the ancient art in order to render the new symbols; but the farther one progresses, the stiffer do the attitudes become, the more barbaric the forms, and art ends by disappearing.

It is to be noted that I say Christianity, and not Catholicism. This is a necessary distinction. In the Christian doctrine the body not only ceases to be the ideal, it becomes an enemy. Far from exalting and glorifying it, it is abased, reviled, tortured, and killed. It was a palace; it is now turned into a prison. The soul that manifested itself gently under the fair form, now is restless within it and seeks to throw it off as though it were the poisoned tunic of Dejanira.

The outrages upon the statue of Adam, moulded by God's own hands as a type of beauty and harmony, were to be speedily punished; ugliness invaded the world along with barbarism.

The conceptions of the arts, if such a name may be applied to confused products no longer directed by any æsthetics, became merely crystallisations that obeyed certain needs within certain surroundings. Deep night settled down upon humanity.

This bitter war waged against the flesh, originally, perhaps, excusable on account of the reaction against sensualism, struck a mortal blow at the plastic arts. Happily Catholicism came to the succour of Beauty sacrificed, and adorned with splendid ornaments the bareness of the evangelical doctrine. The traditions of Greece were renewed, and polytheism lent its graceful forms to worship. The body, under certain not very strict conditions, was relieved of its curse, and then occurred that great movement of the Renaissance, which was immediately counterbalanced by the Reformation, which revived the old Jewish spirit, the hatred of images, of beauty, and of luxury.

The pagan Catholicism of the Renaissance offered the most favourable conditions for art. The spirit, henceforth sure of itself, no longer felt timid hatred of matter; men dared to listen to the nightingale's song and to breathe the scent of the rose without dreading to see the devil's eyes glaring between the leaves, and his

tail whipping round the trunk of the tree. God the Father became as majestic as Jupiter Tonans; Christ borrowed the form of the Pythian Apollo, and the Virgin Mary, standing upon her azure globe, with the crescent of the moon under her feet, became lovelier and more attractive than Venus. Never were the body and the soul associated in happier proportions. Once they were brought back to this supreme type of modern beauty resplendent in physical beauty, plastic creations developed prodigiously. All things were elevated by exquisite taste; trades became arts, and arts poesy.

Soon, however, the doctrines of the Reformation, that is to say negation taking the place of affirmation, stayed this admirable florescence, this wondrous blossoming of the human race.

Ever since the beginning of the world, these dual principles have been contending together, fortune inclining now to the one, now to the other side, and producing eras of artistic splendour or of barbarism. There have at all times existed certain poor, bare, abstraction-loving, over-scrupulous minds which any manifestation shocks, and who hate form and colour as if they were their personal foes. This tendency, which has had its representatives in every age, may be symbolised in

a very intelligible manner by the difference between a Protestant church and a Catholic one, between a Quaker's sober coat and the gold brocade dalmatic worn by a Venetian patrician in a painting by Paolo Veronese.

Now, we must not conceal from ourselves the fact that though we have nominally remained Catholics, it is the Protestant spirit that has prevailed among us. That middle-class, thrifty, quarrelsome doctrine, fits in well with the envious dispositions of our age. The fear of critical examination and the lack of authority have greatly hindered the external development of civilisation. We have naught but dimmed splendour, quiet luxury, crafty magnificence; for more store is set by cost than beauty, by appearances than by effect. Monumental façades have disappeared, palaces have become houses, and dress has turned as nearly as possible into the domino. Out of regard to universal jealousy, every one has put on a black coat and a loose overcoat.

Beauty has been sacrificed to envy.

The atrabilious have invented, for the benefit of fools, a big word,— the Useful; and, haughtier than the Latin poet, they have declined to conjoin with it the Beautiful.

Then the new needs due to civilisation have produced a multitude of unexpected forms that art has not had time to idealise : our modern era, which dates from the discovery of printing, gunpowder, and steam, is still very young ; it scarcely understands the forces it makes use of ; its uncovered mechanism allows the works within to be seen. Our lives are spent among inventions in a skeleton or embryonic state.

Imagine men who have been flayed walking about, all bloody, through the streets, with their black arteries and their blue veins, their red flesh, their network of nerves, and their quivering muscles! Could anything be more horrible? Well, civilisation, from the plastic point of view, presents just such a spectacle; it has the bones, the necessary levers, but the flesh and the skin are wanting, and consequently form is absent. All you see are sharp angles, stiff, awkward lines, ugly elbows, toothed cogs, automatic motions, icy activity that terrifies one as if a galvanised body were to move.

Art has to provide civilisation with an epidermis, and the painter and the sculptor have to complete the machinist's work.

Civilisation has no objection to beauty; it is waiting

until art clothes its framework and armature with noble and graceful garments.

The thing is possible and even easy.

It would have been done already, did not poets, architects, sculptors, and painters persist in looking for their ideal in the conceptions of the past, because they are repelled by arid language, unworkable aspects, and ignoble forms. Unfortunately, they have allowed civilisation to fall into the hands of vaudeville writers, masons, mould-makers, and varnish-makers. The taste of the tailoring race flourishes unchecked, and it is milliners who settle colouring instead of Delacroix or Diaz.

What I propose to accomplish, under the title "Civilisation and the Plastic Arts," is a work disdained so far by artists, namely, the applying of a beautiful form to a comfortable, prosaic, or even vulgar object.

It is to be clearly understood that I accept civilisation just as it is, with its railways, its steamers, its machines, its English researches, its stoves, its chimney-pots, and all its paraphernalia, which have hitherto been thought incapable of picturesqueness.

I must beg to be forgiven this long preamble which may appear to the reader to be too long. Although it contains but a rough statement of ideas, it was indis-

pensable. That world of azure and white marble, called the world of antiquity, may be balanced on the sphere of time by a new world brilliant with steel and gas, as beautiful in its activity as the other was in its serene reverie.

Admirable materials lie ready to hand, and require merely to be put together to produce splendid results. I do not expect to meet with success in the vast undertaking I am entering upon, but I shall point out possibilities, stir up thoughts, and perchance bring artists, now astray while pursuing a retrospective ideal, to the truth.

I shall criticise, but I shall invariably place the correct form by the side of the erroneous one. I shall deny and I shall affirm; I shall take to task for their ugliness both the hat and the locomotive, the palace as well as the trousers with straps, and I shall prove — a thing that requires to be done in these thrifty times — that the ugly is as expensive as the beautiful.

HOFFMANN'S TALES

HOFFMANN is popular in France; more so than in Germany. Everybody has read his tales, and both the janitress and the great lady, the artist and the publican have been satisfied with them. Nevertheless it seems strange that so eccentric a talent, so different from what literary France is used to, should so speedily have been received into communion. The Frenchman is not naturally fanciful, and indeed it would be difficult to be so in a country so plentifully supplied with newspapers and street-lamps. The semi-obscurity, which is so necessary to the play of fancy, does not exist in France either in the thoughts, in the language, or in the houses. The most impossible thing on earth is a tale of Hoffmann's set in surroundings that include Voltairian beliefs, a crystal lamp, and tall windows. Who, passing under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, could possibly observe the little blue serpents writhing around that were visible to Anselmo the schoolboy? And what reader of the *National* could ever entertain such dread of the

devil as to feel the shudder that ran down Hoffmann's back while he was engaged in writing his tales, and compelled him to wake his wife to keep him company? For the matter of that what the devil would the devil come to Paris for? He would come upon other people who are far more devils than he is, and he would be taken in as readily as a country bumpkin. He would have his money swindled out of him at écarté; he would be fooled into taking shares in some company, and if he were not provided with proper papers, he would be sent to jail. Mephistopheles himself, on whose behalf the great Wolfgang von Goethe went to such trouble in the way of rascality and evil skill, and who is in truth quite satanic considering the time at which he appears, would strike us as rather childish. He has but just taken his degree at the University of Jena. *Our* spectres wear white kid gloves and eye-glasses, and at midnight repair to Tortoni's to eat ices. Instead of the awful moans uttered by German ghosts, our Parisian ghosts hum comic opera airs as they stroll through the cemeteries. How then comes it that Hoffmann's tales were so readily and generally understood, and that the most common-sense people on earth should have unreservedly adopted

his mad and vagabond fancies? It cannot be explained by attributing it to the effects of novelty and surprise, for his success is maintained and grows year by year. It is because the idea people have of Hoffmann is erroneous, like all generally received ideas.

Gently buttonhole a literary man, or a man of the world, bring him to bay in a window recess or under a carriage gateway, and, after having inquired the price of stocks and asked after his wife's health, bring the conversation round to Hoffmann by the most ingenious transition you can manage. May I be a cab-horse or a member of a provincial Academy, if he does not at once mention the traditional huge meerschaum pipe and Master Luther's cellar in Berlin. Then he will venture the subtle remark that Hoffmann is a great genius, but a diseased genius, and that as a matter of fact a number of his tales are most improbable. The engraving which represents him seated on a pile of barrels, smoking a big pipe, and surrounded by fanciful scroll work, flibbertigibbets, small serpents, and other bogies, sums up the opinion of the German author which many people, even clever ones, have accepted ready-made.

I do not deny that Hoffmann did smoke a great deal, that he did occasionally get fuddled on German beer or Rhine wine, and that he had frequent attacks of fever, but that sort of thing happens to everybody and has very little to do with his talent. It is desirable to clear up the mind of the public, once for all, on the point of these supposed means of exciting inspiration. Neither wine nor tobacco imparts genius; a great man when drunk lurches from side to side just like anybody else, and because one tumbles into the gutter it does not follow that one will be exalted to the skies. I do not believe that any man ever wrote decently after parting with his brains and his reason, and I fancy that the wildest and most vehement tirades have been composed in the company of a carafe of water.

The cause of Hoffmann's success lies unquestionably in a direction where no one would think of looking for it. It lies in the strong and true feeling for nature which shows so vividly in his most unexplainable compositions.

Hoffmann, in truth, is among writers one of the quickest to seize the character of things and to impart the appearance of reality to the most unlikely creations. At once a painter, a poet, and a musician, he notes

everything under a triple aspect, that of sounds, colours, and feelings. He takes account of external forms with wondrous clearness and accuracy. His touch is sharp and sympathetic; he has the knack of drawing silhouettes, and sportively cuts out innumerable mysterious and striking profiles which it is impossible not to remember and which give the impression of having been seen before.

His method of working is very logical, and he does not, as might be supposed, ramble at haphazard through the realms of fancy.

He begins his tale. There is seen a German interior; a deal floor carefully holystoned, whitewashed walls, windows framed in with hop-vine, a piano in one corner, a tea-table in the centre; the plainest and simplest interior possible. Suddenly, however, one of the piano strings snaps untouched with a sound like the moan of a woman, and the sound long vibrates in the resonant case. The reader's peace of mind is forthwith broken and he mistrusts the apparently calm and honest interior. Hoffmann may affirm as much as he pleases that the string is really nothing else than a string drawn too tight that has snapped as strings snap every day; the reader refuses to be convinced.

Meanwhile the water is heating; the kettle begins to bubble and hiss; Hoffmann, who is getting uneasy himself, listens so intently and so seriously to the humming of the coffee-pot that the reader remarks to himself with terror that there is something about it which is unnatural, and becomes expectant of an extraordinary happening. There enters a maiden, fair and lovely, dressed in white, a flower in her hair, or an old Aulic Councillor, in iron-gray coat, chiné stockings, imitation shoe-buckles, and his hair powdered. On the whole he has a jolly, entertaining face, yet the reader shudders with terror just as if he saw Lady Macbeth appear with her lamp in her hand, or Hamlet's father's ghost glide in. On looking closer at the maiden, he discovers a suspicious green tinge in her eyes; the brilliant carmine of her lips does not strike him as consonant with the waxen pallor of her neck and hands, and just when she thinks she is not noticed a slender lizard's tail is seen quivering in the corner of her mouth. The old Councillor himself makes certain undefinable ironical faces; the reader mistrusts his apparent good-naturedness, begins to entertain the most alarming conjectures concerning his nocturnal occupations, and while the worthy man is deep in the

reading of Puffendorf or Grotius, suspects him of seeking to penetrate into the mysterious secrets of the Cabala and to decipher the much scrawled pages of a devil's horn-book. From that moment suffocating terror oppresses the reader, and he ceases to breathe freely until the end of the tale has been reached. The farther the tale diverges from the ordinary course of things, the more minutely are the objects described, and the accumulation of slight probable circumstances serves to mask the impossibility of the main portion. Hoffmann is endowed with a marvellous gift of observation, especially where ridiculous physical peculiarities are concerned; he notes remarkably well the comical and laughable side of forms, and in this he is singularly like Jacques Callot, and especially like Goya, a Spanish caricaturist who is too little known, and whose works, at once comical and terrible, produce the same effects as the tales of the German story-teller.

In art an untrue thing may be quite true, and a true one quite untrue; it all depends on the execution. Scribe's plays are more untrue than Hoffmann's tales, and there are few books that, artistically speaking, have subjects more readily admissible than "The Entail" and "The Cremona Violin." Then one is agreeably

surprised to come upon pages full of feeling, passages that sparkle with wit and taste, dissertations upon the arts, and an amount of fun and a sense of humour that one does not expect to meet with in a hypochondriacal German who believes in the devil, and also, a matter of importance to French readers, the node is skilfully involved and solved; there are catastrophes and events, in a word all that constitutes interest, in the ideal and the material meaning of the word.

Further, Hoffmann's use of the marvellous is not quite analogous to the use of it in fairy tales; he always keeps in touch with the world of reality, and rarely does one come across a palace of carbuncles with diamond turrets in his works, while he makes no use whatever of the wands and talismans of "The Thousand and One Nights." The supernatural elements to which he commonly has recourse are occult sympathy and antipathy, curious forms of mania, visions, magnetism, and the mysterious and malignant influence of a vaguely indicated principle of evil. It is the positive and plausible side of the fantastic; and in truth Hoffmann's tales should be called tales of caprice or fancy rather than fantastic tales. It follows that the dreamier and cloudier Germans greatly prefer Novalis to him,

and look upon Hoffmann as heavy and fit for the most robust literary stomachs only. His vivacity and the absolutely Italian warmth of his colouring offend their eyes, which are accustomed to the mournful pallor of winter moonlight. Jean Paul Richter, who was assuredly a good judge in matters of this sort, said that Hoffmann's works had the effect of a camera obscura in which one sees the working of a complete living microcosm. This deep feeling for life, though often eccentric and depraved, is one of Hoffmann's greatest merits, placing him far above ordinary tale-writers, and in this respect his stories are far more realistic and probable than many a novel thought out and written with cool steadiness. The moment life shows in a work, success is attained, for it is not difficult to mould clay to any desired form; the important thing is to snatch from heaven or hell the fire that is to vivify the clay phantoms, and since the days of Prometheus it has not often been done.

There is nothing fantastic in the greater number of Hoffmann's tales. "Mademoiselle de Scudéry," "The Entail," "Salvator Rosa," "Master Martin and his Apprentices," and "Marino Faliero," are stories in which the marvellous is explainable in the simplest

possible way, and they are those of his works which unquestionably do him most honour.

Hoffmann was a man who had seen much of the world and of mankind; he had been a theatre manager and had long lived on intimate terms with actors and actresses. In the course of his wandering and well-filled life, he must necessarily have seen and learned much. He occupied various stations in life; he was well off at one time and poor at another; he was acquainted with superfluity and with privations; besides his real life he led an ideal one; he mingled dreams and activity; in a word, he led the life of a man, and not that of a writer only. Indeed, even if his biography were not known, one would guess as much from the number of different characters, plainly taken from life, of keen and caustic remarks about worldly matters, and the thorough knowledge of mankind manifest in every page of his work. His views about the drama are strikingly unconventional and sound, and testify to his close acquaintance with the subject. No one has spoken of music with so thorough a knowledge and so much enthusiasm; his musical characters are master-pieces of naturalness and originality. He alone, being himself a musician, was capable of depicting so comi-

cally the musical sufferings of Chapel-Master Kreisler, for Hoffmann is endowed with a keen sense of the comic and the tribulations of his simple-minded heroes provoke the heartiest laughter.

I lay a good deal of stress upon the human and ordinary side of Hoffmann's talent, for he has unfortunately created a school, and unskilful imitators, mere imitators, in a word, have fancied that all that was needed was to heap absurdities one upon another and to jot down at haphazard the fancies of an over-excited imagination in order to become a fantastic and original writer. On the contrary, even in the maddest and most unruly fancifulness it is necessary that there should be an air of common-sense, a pretext of some sort or other, a plan, characters, and consistency; else the work will be mere empty verbiage, and the most eccentric fancies will not cause the least surprise. There is nothing so difficult as to succeed in a kind of writing in which the fullest liberty is allowed, for the freer the author is, the more exacting the reader becomes; and it is no small praise to say that Hoffmann won so great a success with readers so little disposed to listen to tales of wonder.

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

IF there be a subject known the world over, it is assuredly that of "The Barber of Seville." Beaumarchais' play made such a sensation that it is wellnigh impossible to speak of it without repeating what has already been said until it has become hackneyed. Figaro, Bartolo, Basilio, Rosina, Almaviva, are popular names; they are, notwithstanding their piquant originality, types as general, as human, as eternal, as the masks of the comedy of antiquity. Figaro, with a wit that changes and sparkles like a jacket of Andalusian cloth, sums up in the happiest possible way every Davus and Scappino and Mascarille, the whole breed, in short, of unscrupulous valets who put their cleverness at the service of their masters' passions.

And how engaging is Rosina! How true she is in spite of her little mischievous girl's tricks! And what a breath of youth and love there is in that lovely part of hers which so many famous singers have attempted, though not one has ever fully succeeded in it!

Then Count Almaviva! He is indeed a genuine, great nobleman, brave and loyal at bottom, though he allows himself to be carried away by his passion with the readiness of a man unused to meeting with obstacles.

As for Bartolo, the guardian, he is the equal of Molière's Arnolphe, and more need not be said, while Basilio's name has become a byword like that of Tartuffe.

When the curtain rises, the stage represents a street in Seville, not as it really exists, but as one fancies it must be. I do not know why I always feel sure it must be the Calle de la Serpie, at the point where it debouches into the Cathedral Square. It is a fine spot with broad spaces of shadow and moonlight; the night breeze wafts to it the spicy odours of the orange trees in the patio, and guitar players find low stone posts ready to their feet.

I have no doubt that Bartolo's house stood on the corner where now stands the Café Nuevo. It must have been whitewashed, after the Arab fashion, and covered with a roof of varnished tiles, with gratings at every opening, and *miradores* enshrined in iron-work, looking from a distance like dark eyes in a pale face. A few branches of jasmine planted by Rosina starred

the network of bars, and in the corner flickered a tiny lamp in front of the dark Madonna set within the recess of the wall.

It is in this sort of aerial cabinet, a bird-cage suspended outside the building with a view to intercept the draughts of air that are so valuable in a burning clime, that Rosina spends every moment she can snatch from the watchfulness of her tyrant. The tip of her small foot, in its white satin shoe, shows through the grating, and from under the bottom of the leaded skirt peep her slender, shapely limbs. From time to time there is heard a strange rustling; it is the fan being opened and shut, like the wing of a startled bird, with the rapidity of which Spanish women alone have the secret. What lovely eyes she has, and what long lashes! What a wealth of black hair! What small, well-set teeth, flashing white in her rosy smile! What a complexion of amber and sunshine! No wonder Bartolo is jealous!

I confess that I like Bartolo, and that I think he has never had fair play. He is quite right in objecting to having such a treasure stolen from him and in watching over it with the utmost vigilance. It is true that Molière says that "bolts and bars are but poor safe-

guards for the virtue of maids;" but if virtue under lock and key is not to be trusted, does it follow that Rosina should be presented with the balcony key? Women, of course, will say yes, and men no. What is sure and certain is that it is the saddest and most wretched of fates to be old and in love, to have a heart of fire and hair of snow. I never have been able to laugh with a good heart at all those poor old fellows, guardians of maidens, all those Gérontes and Arnolphes who are fooled, tricked, and deceived. For it is not very pleasant, of a surety, to bring up a ward most tenderly and daintily for one's self, to surround her with attentions and worship, to think of no one else in the world, and then to see her carried off by the first scamp that chances to come along, for no other reason than that he is well set up, has a curly mustache, and walks past with hand on hip.

Very often, when present at a performance of "The Barber of Seville," I have taken Bartolo's part against Almaviva, who is nothing else than a rake; against Figaro, who is a gallows-bird, and even, dare I say it? against Rosina herself, in spite of her adorable fifteen-year-old shamelessness and her resolute simplicity of a little lass who is enjoying her first love affair.

But, when all is said and done, is it not the case that youth draws to youth, and that gratitude, respect, and veneration do not weigh much in comparison with love? So you must e'en console yourself as best you may, poor Bartolo, for I am now entering upon the analysis of your tortures.

Who is that prowling down there, a sombrero pulled well down over his eyes, carefully wrapped in a mantle, and a dark lantern in his hand? Why, it is Fiorello, Count Almaviva's valet, who brings in the musicians, performers of serenades, brutes most deservedly abhorred of guardians, husbands, and jealous people of every kidney. Now the noise begins. Almaviva, his eyes turned up and one hand on his heart, is singing a cold, pretentious, hackneyed thing of the kind that all women, even the cleverest, in all countries and in all ages, think charming. This time, the audience is with the ladies, for the Signor Rossini has embroidered marvellous melodies upon the meaningless words of the Italian song, which are full of meaning precisely because meaningless. Yet the dawn is breaking and Rosina has not appeared; probably because she does not want to hurt the dawn's feelings, for any one who knows Spain will find it hard to believe that a young Sevillian

girl, hearing from her room the lilt of a serenade under her balcony, will not come on tip-toe, half asleep, and press her pretty face against the cross bars of the reja, and *pelar la paba* with her *novio*. And indeed, were I not engaged in describing an Italian opera, I could give you an Andalusian *copla* which affirms that such a thing is impossible and has never been known.

So Count Almaviva cannot understand it, and would almost despair, were it possible for a man of his quality to doubt for a moment his own powers, even though he has now been dancing attendance under the balcony for many a night and many a day. He dismisses the musicians, who are making a terrific row, as do all musicians when they are requested to cease from troubling, and he walks up and down under a portico in front of the house, waiting for the moment when Rosina comes to her window, partly to see if her carnations are blossoming, but a good deal more to observe whether the handsome stranger happens to be strolling around.

Suddenly, in the cool, silent morn, rings out sonorous a song as blithe as that of the lark when Phœbus 'gins to rise, a song of voluble chatter. It is Figaro making his appearance; Figaro in his spangled and

embroidered jacket bestudded with filigree buttons, his punto breeches, his net for the hair (in those days nets were still worn in Spain), his guitar slung on his back, polished like tortoiseshell, and his shaving dish, so refulgent that Don Quixote would have mistaken it for Mambrino's helmet. Every one knows that wonderful air, so catching and irresistible. Passing from mouth to mouth, it has travelled as far as Polynesia, and the natives of the Southern Seas hum it as they cook their breakfast of shell-fish.

Figaro is happy like the gay rascal he is. He enjoys the peace of mind of the unjust, and kind Heayen having endowed him with an easy conscience, he carries on, with the utmost coolness, a whole lot of minor and hazardous businesses that are, on the other hand, exceedingly lucrative. He has lots of fun, little work and enough money. Is not that true happiness? He shaves, he bleeds, he curls hair, he carries love-letters, he brings together young hearts made to understand each other. Gallants, ladies, lovers, jealous people, all need Figaro. Here, Figaro! Hi, Figaro! is the call heard the city over. Take Figaro out of Seville, and life and action vanish with him, for without him no affairs or intrigues are possible,

nor can any love-letter reach the hands it is intended for. What would eldest sons do to get money out of their parents? Who would there be to bring to quiet little suppers a gipsy with golden complexion, an adept in the art of dancing the *zorongo* while swishing her blue skirt diapered with silver stars? Figaro it is who knows the abiding place of black eyes and blue, and of green eyes too, and if he see the sheen of gold through the meshes of a silken purse, he will find a way of getting the owner thereof to talk with the owners of the eyes, in spite of grim fathers and jealous old fools, for he is cleverer than the devil or an old hag. In addition to all the skill he thus displays, he has had the further luck of not being hanged and of living on the best of terms with all the representatives of the law.

— Why! unless I greatly mistake, it is Figaro! says the Count. You are very thin, my lad.

— Hard work, my lord.

— You rascal.

— A thousand thanks, my lord.

— What are you doing in Seville?

— Shaving people. And your lordship?

— I saw a young lady at the Prado, a wonder of beauty, the daughter of a dotard old physician.

— Not his daughter; his ward.

— So much the better. I have been paying court to her for some time past under the name of Lindor.

What a fellow that Almaviva is, to be sure! Right off, he takes the name, among so many names, of Lindor; a name that at once suggests an apricot-coloured coat with black velvet trimmings, a romantic name well calculated to turn the head of every little maid.

— Nothing could be better; I happen to be the barber and hairdresser, the surgeon and botanist, the pharmacist and the veterinary and the business man of the family, replies the worthy Figaro. If you have money, all will be well. But silence; some one is opening the balcony; let us withdraw under the arcades.

Rosina puts her pretty little nose out of the window, and is quite troubled at not seeing handsome Lindor. Bartolo is at her heels, for he cannot fathom the reason of the young lady's matutinal curiosity concerning the state of the weather.

— What is that you have in your hand? What is the paper you are holding?

— The words of an air that is very popular just now: "The Useless Precaution." Oh! such a

pity! I have dropped them. Pray run quickly and pick them up for me.

You know, and the Count knows, that the paper which has fallen from her hands does not contain a single one of the words of "The Useless Precaution." It does not take much wit to know that much. Figaro picks up the paper and hands it to the Count. Bartolo cannot make out in which particular direction the wind has blown the song, and goes upstairs again, grumbling, to make Rosina re-enter the room, swearing the while that he will have the cursed balcony bricked up. While his back is turned, let us hasten to read Rosina's note, for a note it is: —

"Your assiduous attentions have awakened my interest. My guardian will go out presently; as soon as he is gone, try to let me know, by some ingenious means, your name, your condition, and your intentions. I can never come to the balcony without being accompanied by my inseparable tyrant, but you may be sure that I am prepared to do anything to break my fetters."

And that is the sort of thing a decent and lovely girl is led to write to the first spark that happens along by dint of being worried, vexed, annoyed, and odiously kept under watch and ward.

The means will be found, if not by Almaviva, who does not look like a very inventive person, by Figaro. It is a fine thing to be a Count and wealthy. Then one can always have poor devils at hand to be clever for one and to harness themselves to the car of one's fancy or passion.

— Have you any money ? says Figaro.

— Heaps, returns the Count.

— In that case I have thought of something. When I think of the almighty metal my head becomes a volcano, I boil, I ferment ; a thousand ways occur to me. Dress yourself as a soldier.

— As a soldier ? What for ?

— A regiment has just come into the town —

— The colonel, it so happens, is a friend of mine.

— You will be billeted on Bartolo, and there you are ! Nothing could be simpler. For my part I shall keep the old chap so busy that you will have time to whisper in Rosina's ear the four words she expects. Pretend to be drunk ; people are not so suspicious of a man whose brain is clouded by the fumes of wine. In all ages the sincerity of drunken people has been believed in. And now, to work.

— But where shall I find you? Where is your shop? says the Count, observing Figaro on the point of vanishing with the purse.

— My shop is the easiest shop in the world to know. It is on the right, number four, a splendid sky-blue front, with five wigs, six shaving dishes, and a lamp. Can't mistake it.

While the Count goes off to put on his disguise, and Figaro is lathering the customers' cheeks, let us repair to Rosina's room, the furniture of which consists of a piano, a desk, and a grating erected carefully round the balcony. She is alone, holding a letter in her hand, and is singing the lovely cavatina, *Una voce poco fa*, beginning as dainty as a rosebud bursting its corset of green velvet, then blooming and trustful as youth, and towards the end, capricious and wilful, and indulging in coquettish rebellion. The cavatina done, she goes to the desk and writes a letter. She has seen Figaro talking for more than an hour on the square with the Count; they are therefore acquainted; Figaro is a good fellow, willing to help, and perhaps he may assist our loves.

Talk of the devil, and you see his horns; talk of the wolf, and you see his tail; talk of Figaro, and

you see his net. He enters with the light, furtive step common to cats and plotters, who can step on eggs without breaking them.

— Why, good morning, Miss Rosina. What are you doing now?

— I am bored to death.

— There 's something I should like to tell you.

— And there 's something I 'd like to tell you. But silence! I hear my guardian's step. Wait a little.

Bartolo enters, coughing, spitting, grumbling, and quarrels with his niece because she is always talking with that rascally Figaro.

— Are you jealous of Figaro? I own I do like to talk to him; he entertains me, makes me laugh, and tells me ever so much nonsense.

— Yes, but what is the meaning of that stain of ink on your finger?

— I burned my finger and dipped it in the ink-bottle.

— There is a sheet of paper wanting. What have you done with it?

— I made a paper bag of it to put sweets in for little Marceline. Does that satisfy you?

— No, angrily retorts the old fellow. You are telling me tales and trying to fool me.

While the quarrel is proceeding, enters Don Basilio, a tall, gawky fellow, thin, skinny, yellow, bilious looking, bony, unhealthy, with a venomous look; a rascal with low, flat brow, thin lips, forked tongue, who seems to have been cut out to wear a black cassock and a wide-brimmed hat; a fellow of the stuff of which spies, inquisitors and executioners are made; a soft-tongued villain always ready for sinister and evil undertakings.

He approaches and whispers in Bartolo's ear that the unknown gallant who is prowling under Rosina's balcony is none else than the famous Count Almaviva, who has recently come to Seville.

The danger must be warded off, but quietly. In what way? By means of a nice little piece of slander.

It is here that comes in the wonderful air, in which the composer has possibly surpassed the writer, although the tirade is one of the most brilliant things ever written by a human pen: —

— Calumny! at first a faint whisper that skims over the ground like a swallow before a storm, pianissimo, breathing low and gliding along dropping its poisoned darts. This one picks it up, and piano, piano, drops it into your ear skilfully. The harm is done, it

germinates, it crawls, it makes its way, and rinforzando from mouth to mouth it goes like the devil. Then suddenly, I know not how, you see calumny rise up, hiss, swell, grow visibly; it starts, spreads its pinions, whirls, envelops, drags out, carries away, bursts out, thunders, and becomes a general hue and cry, a public crescendo, a universal chorus that resounds everywhere, and the unhappy wretch, slandered, reviled, overwhelmed, falls, *most fortunately*, under the weight of general execration. — What think you of it?

— That is all very fine, replies Bartolo, sufficiently edified; but there is a surer way yet. I shall wed the girl to-morrow.

— Let me have some money, says Basilio, who, in these matters, holds the same doctrines as Figaro, and I engage to draw off the coxcombs.

Whereupon the fool and the rascal pass into another room.

— So, that is the way you go to work, you dear old scoundrel, says Figaro, issuing from his hiding-place. You are a nice fellow with your sour lemon look and your hypocritical airs. And that other old ass who fancies he is going to wed Rosina! That dainty morsel is not meant for his toothless old gums; not

if I know it. Here she comes in the very nick of time. I must try to speak to her while they are closeted together. Senorita, I have a great piece of news for you. To-morrow, without fail, you wed your amiable guardian. He is in the next room engaged in drawing up the necessary papers with your music master.

— Figaro, I promise you one thing: that marriage shall not take place. But, by the way, who is the young gentleman you were talking to just now on the square?

— A cousin of mine and a good fellow; a warm-hearted chap. He is here to complete his studies and make his fortune.

— He will certainly do that, answers Rosina.

— He has one great fault, however; he is madly in love.

— Do you know who it is he is in love with?

— She is small, dainty, with splendid black hair and eyes; the first letter of her name is R; she is called Ro— Rosi—

— It is I, exclaims the young girl in the seventh heaven of happiness. I was right!

— Come, let me have a couple of lines from you;

time presses, says the prompt barber. Sit down at the desk there.

— I shall never dare to, says Rosina, at the same time drawing from her bosom a delicately folded note.

— She has the note already written! exclaims Figaro with a gesture of admiration, and I who — Well, a nice fool I am! O women! women! the most stupid of you could give points to the devil.

The note is speedily handed over, and Count Almaviva, sure that Rosina approves, speedily makes use of the stratagem sprung from Figaro's fruitful brain. Disguised as a cavalryman, he comes to the house of grumpy Bartolo, describing the most extraordinary zigzags, and with the gestures and the hiccoughs of a drunken man. I leave you to imagine the sort of reception he meets with at the hands of the irascible old gentleman, who is perfectly justified, this time, in getting very angry when he beholds the brutal trooper noisily invading his house. Rosina, ever alert, ever wide awake, and on the watch, hastens in at the sound and inquires the cause of the unusual disturbance.

— I am Lindor, whispers the Count to her.

— Be prudent, returns Rosina.

— Let your handkerchief drop on this note, and pick it up, goes on the Count, describing an exceedingly sharp angle and pretending to lose his centre of gravity.

Rosina manages to obtain possession of the love-letter with a deftness worthy of the cleverest prestidigitator, and the row goes on between the Count and Bartolo, the latter in vain alleging that he is exempted from lodging soldiers. The Count pays no heed to his arguments, and in order to scare the old gentleman, draws his bilbo and makes lunges into the empty air. The old fellow yells and the row becomes so great that the authorities intervene, to the great grief of Rosina and the great joy of Bartolo. The police are about to march Lindor off to jail when, brushing aside the alguazils with a haughty and imperious air, he hands the alcalde a letter. The alcalde, after having glanced at it, bows to the ground and signs to his men to release the trooper, who himself withdraws in the swing of a finale full of life, agitation and volubility, such as Rossini alone knows how to compose.

Although Don Bartolo is by no means bright, the drunken soldier business has struck him as very suspicious; jealousy is apt to make even the densest gray-

beards clear-sighted. His credulity, however, is about to be tested even more severely. Lindor, or Count Almaviva, if you like that better, returns ere long under the disguise and the name of Alonzo, a supposed pupil of Basilio's, to take the latter's place at the music lesson he is in the habit of giving Rosina.

Bartolo receives him rather sourly, and is hard to convince that Basilio is really as ill as Alonzo pretends. In fact, to the Count's great terror, he has already taken his stick with a view of ascertaining the facts for himself. The Count can think of nothing better than fooling him with a supposed piece of confidential information, and hands him Rosina's note. Reassured by this proof of devotion to his interests, Bartolo goes to fetch the girl from her room and allows her to take her lesson with her new teacher. People talk of the lynx's eyes; a lynx is no better than a mole in comparison with a girl in love; Bartolo's ward has seen at a glance who it is she is going to sing with.

The piano is pulled forward, and the Count glances over the music lying upon it.

— What shall we sing?

— This rondo by Buranello.

— It is too old, answers Rosina.

— This bolero ?

— It is miauled every night under every window; it is sickening, puts in Bartolo.

— A Venetian barcarole ?

— That will do.

Whereupon the Count sets Rosina to sing a charming melody for which the singers who take this part are foolish enough to substitute very difficult and very wearisome show pieces. The words are delightful: —

"A golden-haired maid in my gondola the other night I took. The little dear from sheer pleasure fell asleep, and on my arm lay dozing. From time to time I woke her, and the rocking of the craft cradled her to sleep again."

The situation could not be much prolonged did not clever Figaro come to Count Almaviva's help, for the nobleman, like Lelio, Mascarille's master, is not a person of ready resource. Figaro persuades Bartolo that this is the day on which he is shaved, and under pretext of fetching the necessary utensils, gets hold of his bunch of keys, quick as a monkey abstracts the key that opens the balcony gate, and by innumerable tricks, each more ridiculous than the others, gives the lovers time to settle

their plans. He blinds the old chap with foaming lather, covers his face up with a napkin, and so on. At midnight Almaviva is to be under the balcony with a rope-ladder, everything is to be in readiness, and the pair of lovers will elope together.

But O ill fortune! Here the tall yellow wax candle rolled up in a strip of black cloth, the bird of evil omen, the owl, the raven Basilio, comes in person to give the lie to the fable invented by the Count. Of course when he makes his appearance, there is a general shout of: —

— How ghastly pale you are!

— You look like a corpse!

— You have the smell of fever on you!

— Go to bed and dose yourself!

Basilio, who is not any greener than usual, is astounded at all this hullabaloo about his ill health, but a purse which the Count slips into the wretch's bony hand, enlightens him. He finds out that he is very poorly indeed, and withdraws to take to his bed.

But the jealous Bartolo's suspicions are again aroused by a word he has caught, and he kicks out the sham music teacher and his acolyte with an abundance of curses. They retire laughing, for all their arrangments

are made, and there is no longer any reason why they should stay in their foe's house.

Bartolo sends for Basilio to return and questions him. Basilio informs him that he is not in the least acquainted with Alonzo, and that he has no pupil of that name.

— Then that Alonzo must have been some emissary of the Count's.

— Or the Count himself; his purse testifies to that, remarks Basilio to himself.

— Now I think of it, exclaims Bartolo, we must make Rosina believe that the note which Alonzo handed me had been given by the Count to a mistress of his.

Of course the poor girl is indignant when she sees in Bartolo's dirty hand the dear little note written under such difficulties, and which she had carried so long inside her corset before finding an opportunity to hand it on. In her despair, she consents to wed Bartolo. It is a sort of suicide. The graybeard, transported with joy, hurries off to fetch the notary.

Meanwhile the hour appointed for the elopement strikes. Almaviva and Figaro make their appearance at the top of the ladder. At first Rosina thinks she will call out for help; she accuses Lindor of having deceived her, but he throws himself at her feet, reveals

his real name and rank, and wins forgiveness. It is never difficult to do that when one is young and handsome.

Rosina consents to go with him, and the pair make ready to get over the balcony, when they discover that the ladder has been removed. At the same time steps are heard on the stairs.

— Who goes there?

— Master Basilio, accompanied by the notary.

— By Jove! It could not be better. Mr. Notary, here is the affianced pair, says Figaro, pointing to the Count and Rosina. You have the marriage contract; insert their names, if you please, and let us sign quickly. I am witness for his lordship, and Don Basilio for the lady.

— But I am not sure that I ought —

— Perhaps you would prefer to be chucked out of the window?

— No, no indeed; it is too unhealthy. I prefer to sign.

And Bartolo, who after taking away the ladder, had gone for the watch, arrives just as the contract has been signed and sealed. He wants to have Almaviva and Figaro arrested on a charge of having burglariously

entered his premises, but the Count states who he is, and as, all being said and done, he proposes to marry Rosina without a portion, the miserly guardian gives his consent to the match, and comes to the conclusion that he gains more than he loses by the bargain.

Before I close, let me add a few particulars of the vicissitudes undergone by Rossini's masterpiece.

The young composer was twenty-four when he wrote "The Barber of Seville" at Rome for the Argento Theatre. An opera on the same subject had already been written in Russia, towards the end of the previous century, by Paësiello, Catherine's favourite composer. The Neapolitan master's "Barber of Seville" made a sensation in the Eternal City after having been very coldly received at first, and Rossini's attempt was considered a sort of sacrilege; very much as if a French writer were to venture on re-writing Racine's "Andromache."

The first performance was so stormy that Rossini dared not appear at the piano on the second night, pretended to be ill and went to bed, waiting anxiously for the result of the second attempt.

At about midnight, he heard a great tumult, saw the flashing of torches through the windows, and heard

numberless steps sounding on the stairs. The poor maestro, trembling in every limb, took refuge under his blankets, convinced that the Romans proposed to make him expiate, by cutting him up, the crime of having eclipsed Paësiello's work. But it was not that; the luck had turned, the "Barber" had met with shining success, and it was an ovation, a serenade which they were coming to give to Rossini, henceforth recognised as the greatest master in Italy and the whole world.

IN GREECE

I

THE PARTHENON

ON issuing from the Propylæa, one beholds the Parthenon!

Let me dwell awhile on this simple word which calls up so many thoughts: the Parthenon, or Temple of the Virgin; for Minerva, called Pallas Athene by the Greeks, was the purest creation of pagan mythology. Sprung fully grown and fully armed from Jupiter's brain, she knew no stain, not even the one original stain. By her lance watched the dragon that guarded her virginity; the sleepless owl stared out from above her helm with its night-bird's eyes, and her chaste bosom was protected by the Medusa's head. In overcrowded Olympus she was the one pure, ideal, and really divine figure, and, be it said without venturing on any sacrilegious comparison, the Madonna of that corrupt heaven in which all the vices of earth were personified in some deity.

Thus it was that her temple was the most magnificent of all pagan fanes, and the one on which the genius of antiquity lavished its highest efforts.

The existing Parthenon is not the original building, overthrown during the Persian invasion, and the débris of which are strewn on the platform of the Acropolis or buried under constructions of more recent date. Ictinus and Callicrates erected, during the reign of Pericles, the Leo X of Attica, a temple which they made so radiantly perfect that Time seems to have regretted having to touch it, and that, but for barbarous man, it would have come down intact to our days. The ages, more pious than nations, had respected it as though they had the feeling for art and had understood how impossible it was for humanity to repeat such a marvel. For there, indeed, set upon the Acropolis as upon a golden tripod in the midst of the sculptural choir of the mountains of Attica, shines immortally true, absolute, perfect Beauty. After that, there are but varieties of decadence, and Greece, leaning upon mighty ruins, still has the proud aristocratic right to spurn all else as barbaric. We have got rid of our tattooing, we have pulled the fish-bones from our noses, we have exchanged our stone hatchets for

needle-guns, but that is all. In the presence of this work, so pure, so noble, so beautiful, so harmoniously balanced, so divinely rhythmical, one becomes humbly and deeply thoughtful, troublesome questions suggest themselves, and one must fain wonder whether human genius, that fancies it strides so fast along the path of progress, has not, on the contrary, retrograded; and one comes to the conclusion that, in spite of new religions, of inventions of all sorts, — the mariner's compass, the printing-press, the steam-engine, — the notion of beauty has either vanished from this earth, or else that the children of this world are powerless to express it.

The Propylæa are not exactly in accord with the axis of the Parthenon, which, owing to the configuration of the ground, is a little more to the right. The ancients did not strive, as we do, to attain rigorous, mathematical symmetry, but rather happy oppositions of masses; and they were right.

The road followed, between blocks of marble, débris of Turkish hovels, and sub-structures of ancient walls, up to the façade of the marvellous monument, is the primitive path itself, which has been cleared away down to the living rock. Ictinus, Callicrates,

Phidias and all those great men who are now living the immortal and universal life, have trod with their divine feet upon these sacred stones that every artist ought to kiss, his brow humbly pressing the dust of ages.

The façade consists of eight Doric columns, raised on three steps, and of a triangular pediment. Nothing could be more simple, and a few lines ruled on a piece of white paper would suffice to give the geometrical appearance; yet the impression it produces is profound, sudden, and irresistible. All the vain dreams one had dreamed vanish like fleeting shadows; the clouds part, and in the golden beam that rays the serene azure sky, the reality appears in its sov'ran power, a thousand times grander than the imagination.

So many sunsets have impregnated with their rosy hues the white columns of Pentelicus marble since the day, two thousand four hundred years ago, when they rose into the blue Athenian sky at the call of Pericles, that the stone, enriched by successive layers of glow, has acquired extraordinarily vigorous and powerful reddish, orange, and sienna tones. It looks as if it had been candied by that rich, ardent light, which does

not afflict ruins with the leprosy of moss and the stains of unhealthy vegetation. The marble has with time become golden, like silver that is gilt.

The dazzlingly white façade which one has built up in one's imagination, forgetful of the ages that have elapsed, melts like a snowflake under a burning sunbeam, and glorious colour is found where one had thought of beauteous form only. A few crude scars, a few garish blemishes due to shells and cannon-balls, alone impair the warm harmony, and if Spanish gongorism were admissible in presence of this noble Athenian severity, it might be said that the white lips of the divine temple's wounds silently protest against man's bestial barbarity.

The eight columns, fluted in straight, chaste folds, like those of the tunic of Pallas Athene, the goddess with the bluish-green eyes, spring at once and without a pedestal from the marble step that serves them for a base, to the harmoniously swelling curves of their capitals, diminishing with infinite delicacy of gradation, and, like all the perpendicular lines in the building, leaning backwards imperceptibly, inclined as they are by a secret rhythm towards an ideal point placed in the centre of the temple, — Minerva's brain, or the

architect's, mayhap; the radiant thought towards which bend, in a unanimous movement of mystical adoration, unnoted by the ordinary eye, the outward forms of the temple.

In spite of their oddity, I can find no better word to express the ineffable beauty of these columns than to say that they are human. The glowing marble seems to be skin browned by the sun, and they look like a company of youthful canephoræ bearing the mystic van upon their heads. It was when the sacred processions were passing along the road to Eleusis that Ictinus and Callicrates, their minds filled with the loveliness of the forms they beheld, drew the pure profiles of these columns. We, who know only the icily mathematical straight line, which, as a matter of fact, is only the shortest way from one point to another, as it is employed by our pseudo-classical architects, have no conception of the extreme sweetness, of the infinite suavity, of the tender and penetrating grace of which a straight line, thus treated, is susceptible. The Chamber of Deputies and the Church of the Madeleine, which we fondly fancy are like the Parthenon, are but coarse imitations, like those effected by children with wooden blocks, ready

cut, in the architectural playthings that are given them on New Year's Day.

Unfortunately the tympanum of the pediment is damaged, but time is not to be blamed for this. A drawing made in 1600 represents the masterpiece of Greek sculpture as almost intact at that time. It had traversed the ages and escaped the barbarians; it had but to make three hundred-year strides more to reach us in its glorious integrity. The Gauls under Brennus, the Burgundians under Walter de Brienne, the Florentines under Acciajuoli, the Turks under Othman, had not touched its hard marble skin. Scarcely had a few of the cannon-balls fired by Morosini the Peloponnesian scored white ricochets upon the divine sculptures. It was a civilised being, Lord Elgin, who caused to be torn from the pediment the figures of Phidias which had been spared by the shells. He did it with Vandal-like brutality, and as awkwardly as a drunken porter, drawing down on himself the avenging epigram which Byron, the noble poet, engraved upon the top of the profaned monument, at the risk of breaking his neck: *Quod non fecerunt Gothi, hoc fecerunt Scoti*, — in imitation of a similar play upon words directed against the Barberini in Rome, who built themselves a palace out

of three of the arches of the Coliseum: *Quod non fecerunt Barbari, hoc fecerunt Barberini.* It is true that the wonderful figures which were thus stolen are now in the British Museum, where they may be admired by the visitor on his way back from the Tower and Barclay and Perkins's brewery, but the noble marbles, used to the warm air of Attica, must shiver indeed in the London fog, and pine for the rosy beams of the setting sun that seemed to send the purple of life coursing through their Pentelicus veins.

At each angle of the pediment there remains one figure, the torso of a man and the body of a woman, fragments of the mutilated poem. These two bodies of broken statues are headless, and they are damaged and mutilated, but their imperishable beauty has survived innumerable outrages, and makes itself felt through two or three lines so exquisite as to drive to despair every modern sculptor. These isolated and broken figures seem to be mourning over their absent companions, and to be chanting upon the ruins the dirge of the deserted.

A frieze comprising fourteen metopes, divided by fifteen triglyphs, rests upon the eight Doric columns I have been speaking of. Each metope contains a

carved subject almost undecipherable now, unfortunately for art, on account of the breaking off of the projections, the obliteration of the hollows, and the scaling away of the marble due to the heat of summer and the cold of winter. Time, which occasionally improves a rough piece of sculpture with its intelligent touch, has borne too hardly on these fine reliefs. The frieze runs round the four sides of the temple, but it can be made out plainly on the anterior and posterior faces only.

A second row of columns, also Doric, stands in front of the pronaos and bears a frieze laden with sculptures, a procession of figures travelling from right to left: men, women, horses, and horsemen performing a carved Panathenea, with free, life-like, easy arrangement, grouping, attitudes of bodies, and flow of draperies, that in no wise breaks the lines of the architecture and loses none of its hieratic gravity. Preserved by the outer frieze, these *bassi-relievi* have suffered much less than the others, and I am indebted to the barbarity of the Turks, the ancient profaners of the Parthenon, for the means of inspecting them more closely.

Between the second row of columns and the right angle of the naos wall, rises a heavy mass of masonry

of bricks and mud, in which the first two columns of the row are engaged. It is the shell of an old ruined minaret, the stair of which is entered from the interior of the temple. The stair itself is broken in many places; the steps are gone, and the slope alone is left. By keeping to the spiral the level of the frieze is reached, and it may be seen close if one ventures upon the marble blocks that crown the building. It is then possible to note the beauty of the work more in detail, but one must not get lost in artistic ecstasy or step back incautiously, as the consequence would be a fifty-foot drop and a smash of every bone upon the sacred ground.

The walls of the naos, which still stand in part, though there are large breaches where the stones have fallen away, are easily made out, the architecture being so simple, clear, and logical that the broken lines are prolonged of themselves. The walls consist of large rectangular blocks of Pentelicus marble, joined with such care and accuracy that the columns which remain standing appear to be monoliths. The distinctive feature of Greek architecture of the best period is the extreme carefulness and marvellous finish of the workmanship; the round blocks for the columns were

ground round and round on each other, like mill-stones, in order to make them fit perfectly, and then an olive-wood clamp fastened them together. A number of these clamps have been found in the ruins and preserved. Neither explosions, earthquakes, lightning bolts, nor bombardments have been able to disunite these marbles, which are set one within the other as accurately as English hinges.

In the interior are to be seen the faint traces of Byzantine paintings, for before being turned into a mosque, the Parthenon had been a Christian church. About the centre of the nave, I noticed on the pavement a square mark of a different colour; this was the spot where rose the ivory and gold statue of Pallas Athene, Phidias's masterpiece, in her severe and virginal beauty, protectress and sponsor of the city.

By the way, talking of Phidias, scholars affirm that this statue was the only work of his in the Parthenon; according to them, the *bassi-relievi* on the metopes must be attributed to other sculptors, for the author of the Minerva and of the Olympian Jove worked in ivory only, and never used marble. I am not sufficiently versed in these matters to say how much weight ought to be given to this statement, but I own that it would

grieve me to have to dissociate the name of Phidias and the Parthenon frieze.

Round the place where presumably stood the pedestal of the statue, are seen, among a number of scattered blocks, the shafts of small columns which formed the interior order of the temple. It would seem to be most probable that this order comprised two rows of superimposed Ionic pillars, but there is nothing left of it nowadays.

The Opisthodomos, or Treasury, occupies the back of the nave, and was probably semicircular, but the real outline is hard to make out under the mass of débris and of pieces of broken columns. The roof is gone, and the temple of Pallas has no other covering than the blue Athenian sky. Of the fifteen columns that run along the longer sides of the parallelogram formed by the temple, there are six broken at different heights on the sea side, and nine on the land side, so that the air shows in blue cuts in the outline of the Parthenon when it is seen from a distance. These breaks, regrettable from an artistic point of view, are less so from the picturesque, for they give air to the ruin and make it lighter.

The warm orange colour that gilds the principal

façade has not spread to the other parts of the temple, the marble there having preserved its pristine whiteness, or at least being of a relatively lighter tone. The contrast, which might be startling, does not strike one at first, being toned down by the perspective; the southern pediment is golden, and the northern snow-white.

On the triple steps that form the base of the temple are lying pieces of the frieze, portions of the courses of the walls, and broken pillars, among which, so dry is the climate and so burning hot the temperature, no weeds have grown. One would in vain look there for the nettles, hemlock, mallows, asphodel, ivy, ferns, saxifrage, and wall plants that cast a mantle of verdure over old stones in our moist climate; the temple, with its scattered blocks of stone, so crude of tone and so sharp on the edges, looks more like a building in process of erection than like a ruined monument. Botanists, however, have discovered a small local plant which grows on the Acropolis only, and the name of which escapes me. I should have dearly liked to bring back a specimen of it carefully put away in vellum, but it is in the spring only that it blooms, and four months of sunshine had calcined the bare rock, which is more arid than pumice-stone even.

II

THE TEMPLE OF THE WINGLESS VICTORY

On ascending the slope, with its broken, disjointed steps, which leads from the gate discovered by Beulé to the façade of the Propylæa, and on reaching, amid excavations, rubbish mixed with human bones and skulls, and blocks of marble, a point about midway up, there is seen on the left the pedestal of the statue of Agrippa, with the Temple of the Wingless Victory on the right. The rock face, covered with retaining walls, forms a terrace, the two wings of which frame in the steps.

Before this entrance was cleared (which was not the case on the occasion of my visit to Athens), the Acropolis was reached by a small side path that passed in front of the platform of the Temple of Nike Apteros, and was quite unworthy of Mnesicles' majestic porch. Yet, in spite of every presumption to the contrary, when the ground was inspected and architectural logic was taken into account, it was believed that this indirect and out of the way road had always been the means whereby access was had to the Athenian citadel. The point now is whether the stairway that exists at present is the original one.

Scholars are of opinion that the steps which still exist were reconstructed in the course of a restoration by the Romans in the second or third century, the marble of the Greek steps having been worn down by the feet of fifteen or twenty generations. That is a question I shall not attempt to solve, for my business is that of a mere tourist, though I think it is likely the scholars are right.

In the face of the substructure opposite the Pnyx are two recesses separated by a pilaster; in the belief of the Turks this was the opening, filled with sand and walled up, of two subterranean passages which led to the upper platform; they are merely two niches scarcely deep enough to hold a statue, though some have affirmed they were cryptic sanctuaries of Mother Earth and Demeter Chloe; but a curious scene in Aristophanes' "Lysistrata" disposes of this suggestion.

A series of antique steps, recently replaced, and running up the terrace wall, which is about twenty-four feet high, leads to the Temple of Victory, situated somewhat in front of the Venetian tower which spoils the right wing of the Propylæa.

The small size of the temple surprises one, but it is no less elegant because small; the Greeks knew how

to impart the idea of grandeur by the eurhythmy of lines, without needing to resort to enormous masses; and this monument, which might be loaded bodily upon a railway truck, does not look in the least crushed by the formidable propinquity of the Propylæa and the Parthenon.

The miniature temple is built throughout of Pentelicus marble; the lovely material, of so soft a tone and so perfect a grain, heightens the perfection of the form. It seems to have been created purposely to furnish immortal flesh for gods and columns for temples.

The building consists of a cella raised upon three steps, and of two tetrastyle porticoes, of the Ionic order, the one on the façade and the other at the opposite end.

The façade, which is rather irregularly orientated, faces obliquely the tower I have mentioned, so that as one ascends the slope, the posterior portico is first seen diagonally, which is contrary to our modern notions of absolute symmetry, — a point on which the ancients laid little stress, as may be seen by the fact that their monuments are placed picturesquely rather than geometrically. It may also be that the necessity of concentrating a large number of buildings within a naturally

restricted sacred space compelled them to be somewhat lax in the matter of regularity.

The columns of the portico, the shafts of which are in one piece, twelve feet high, are striated with flutings crumpled and crinkled by time like the folds of a fine tunic upon the body of a lovely woman. They look like drapery negligently cast by Phidias upon the hip of a statue. Clever breaks and appropriate erosions have broken the straight lines and the clean edges, and imparted to the marble, of a golden transparency, the appearance of soft byssus cloth.

Ovid, in his "Metamorphoses," tells a good many stories of nymphs transformed into trees and still breathing under the warm bark. These columns, so life-like in their gracefulness, make one think of maidens whose white bodies and white draperies have been caught within the slender blocks. The capitals themselves prolong the illusion, for the rounded volutes recall the tresses of hair twisted on the temples, and the ornamentation the rich gems in the hair.

As one looks upon these lovely columns, the idea suggests itself that perchance ruin adds more to buildings than it takes from them. It may be that the lines which have been softened by time did not at first

possess such exquisite *morbidezza*, and incomparable suavity; when they were brand-new, they must have exhibited an architectural regularity that could not have produced so favourable an effect. Besides, this sort of softening of reliefs suits the Ionic order particularly well, for, if it be permitted to assign a sex to columns, it looks, by the side of the virile Doric, like a beautifully adorned woman by the side of an austere and robust young man. The small size of the temple justified the use of a more delicate style, and the somewhat slender elegance of the shafts is explained by the slightness of the burden they had to carry, a burden greatly diminished now, for the pediment has vanished and the frieze alone is left.

Two rather slender pillars, which, besides, are masked by the columns, form the entrance to the cella. There are still visible holes cut in the stones which show that the sanctuary was formerly closed by a grating, through which the faithful could look upon the statue of the goddess placed at the back; for the whole of the interior is no larger than an ordinary room.

The statue was of wood, like almost all archaic figures. It was venerated on account of its great age, and the very fact that it was of barbaric form inspired

a superstitious respect that would not have been felt for more beautiful and more skilful modern work; just as, among us, there are certain Black Madonnas on gilt backgrounds that are far more highly honoured by the vulgar than the most exquisite Virgins of Raphael.

The statue was not that of the Wingless Victory, but that of Victorious Minerva, or, more literally, Minerva Victory (Athena Nike). Victory, a purely allegorical being, had no temple among the Greeks. The ancients placed it, in the shape of a small winged figure, in the hand of the gods, as an attribute of omnipotence. The Minerva of the Parthenon bore in her ivory palm a golden Victory, which she held in or released as she pleased, as a falconer recalls or lets fly the falcon. No doubt, when the meaning of the pagan myths began to be forgotten, the wingless statue excited surprise, and the ingenious explanation was lighted upon of Nike Apteros being unable to fly away from the rock of the Acropolis and being permanently settled in the temple. It is said that there was in Sparta a chained figure of Mars that expressed the same idea by means of an analogous symbol.

The roof of the building has fallen in, but that of the portico still stands, and it is yet possible to make

out the traces of the metal roses within the compartments. Round the temple runs a frieze of *bassi-relievi*, the figures in which, not through the attacks of time, which is far less destructive than is generally believed, but through man's brutality, have lost heads or arms or legs.

What a singular instinct of imbecile perversity it is which has led every nation that has appeared in succession upon the soil of Athens, and which has mingled its bones with the splinters from the broken marble, to mutilate the monuments, to scar the bodies of heroes and goddesses, and to dishonour the wondrous masterpieces of antiquity! It is impossible to refrain from feeling madly angry, and to include in one general anathema Romans, Byzantines, Frenchmen, Italians, Turks, and modern Greeks, — for one and all have wrought havoc, have profaned and outraged, — when it is so plainly seen, by the perfect preservation of the remains spared by cannon-balls, shells, and explosions, by pick-axes and hammers, that all these marvels would have come down intact to our own times but for the vandalism of both victors and vanquished; for upon the surface of the hard, polished marble of Pentelicus, the years have streamed like mere drops of water.

On account of their smaller proportions and of the comparatively low height at which they are placed, the sculptures on the Temple of the Wingless Victory must have greatly suffered. What has survived, however, is so beautiful as to make one regret most keenly what has vanished. The frieze on two of the faces, the north and the west, was removed by Lord Elgin, and is now in London. It was replaced by terra-cotta casts, one of which broke as it was being put up, and it was found that the pieces were used for the construction of part of a Turkish powder-magazine.

The sagacity of scholars and antiquarians has long been taxed, and is even now taxed, to divine the meaning of the subject of the eastern frieze, that which is on the façade of the temple. The most ingenious, but at the same time the most unsatisfying and unconvincing hypotheses have been put forward; the mutilated marble keeps its secret and reveals its beauty alone. Nor does art ask more, for what matters it whether it be an apotheosis or a judgment, an unknown myth or an historical event?

In the centre of the composition stands a female figure armed with a shield, her gesture indicating that she formerly held a lance. On her right and on her

left, seated, the one upon a rock, the other upon a throne, are two figures in the attitude attributed to divinities, and on either hand there is a symmetrical group of men and women. Outside this central composition there is going on an unintelligible action, a mysterious drama that has given rise to innumerable conjectures. At one of the ends of the bas-relief, a draped and seated figure seems to be contending with two women; at the other end, three women seem to be hastening up, while two others appear to be restraining a small winged, nude genie or Cupid.

Such is the general arrangement that can be made out through the cracks, the worn portions, and all the outrages that so many centuries of barbarism have inflicted upon a delicate masterpiece within the reach of the maces of the soldiery and the stones of the small boy, that everlasting destroyer. The figures in the centre and at the ends are very badly damaged, but those in the other groups have, as a rule, lost their heads and parts of their arms only; the torsos are entire, and there are but few breaks in the folds of the marble draperies. It is possible even yet to admire the free, proud flow of these draperies, and the harmonious way in which they cling undulatingly to the bodies,

more like an atmosphere than like vestments. The figures have the balanced and rhythmical attitudes, and the slightly bent limbs and prominent hips the ancients were so fond of, and that were, in a way, the music of human form. Immortal beauty shines through the stupid mutilations, and artist souls still own the sway of the crippled gods and headless heroes.

The other sides, more or less deteriorated, are filled with bands of warriors, and represent an idealised battle, the name and date of which it is impossible to fix definitively. The names of all the Greek victories rise to the lips, but not one of them settles upon the frieze, folds its golden wings, and marks with its finger the desired title. History bites its nails, but art smiles as it looks at the battle so well begun, at the beautiful groups so full of life, at the whole composition which is so thoroughly sculptural. It is quite certain that the enemy are Medes or Persians, for they are recognisable by their chlamys, their pleated trews, their almost feminine head-dress, so that at first they were taken for Amazons. The Greek warriors are quite nude, save that on their shoulders flutter light mantles, and there is nothing about them to mark a particular epoch. It would be less difficult to settle the sculptural date of

the friezes, for the style seems to indicate the period that elapsed between the times of Phidias and of Lysippus. Art has reached the highest point of perfection, but is not yet falling into decadence, though it becomes more refined through the necessity of doing something new and avoiding famous commonplaces. This is, perhaps, for refined minds, the most exquisite moment in the ages of greatness: Beauty is conscious of its existence; it is deliberately brought about instead of being spontaneous, and when the attempt is successful, when the supreme end is attained, no human effort can go farther.

It would appear, from recent discoveries, that the edge of the terrace towards the steps was adorned with a balustrade of marble slabs ornamented with *bassi-relievi* and surmounted with a railing. A number of the slabs have been placed within the cella, where they may be admired. One of them represents a woman endeavouring to hold back a bull which one of her companions is walking in front of or running away from, and another the winged figure known as the Sandalled Victory. There is nothing more perfect in Greek art than this youthful body, which the transparent drapery caresses as loving lips might do. It

ceases to be marble; it is woven air, a weft of wind that plays about the entrancing form with chaste yet warm voluptuousness. The action of the arm that unfastens the sandal strap is wonderfully easy and natural; the other hand lightly grasps the falling drapery, and the fluttering wings partly upbear the bending body like the wings of a bird that has just alighted. From what golden or azure heaven came down this ideal creation, incarnated in the pure marble, the whiteness of which time has respected? May not this anonymous Victory be Phidias' Muse poising itself on the Acropolis for the last time ere it wings its flight to vanish for ever?

III

THE ERECHTHEIUM, THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA POLIAS, THE PANDROSEIUM

THE plateau of the Acropolis formed a perfect museum. Upon that narrow plot of ground encumbered with temples, statues, and altars, pagan art had delighted in heaping up marvels, and had made of all these monuments one temple, as it were, — one single oblation. It would take a more erudite person than I am to restore and reconstitute all these buildings, for

in many cases all that is left of them is a fragment of a frieze, a portion of the shaft of a column, a mutilated capital, sometimes less, not more than two or three courses of stone, or a groove in the rock, indicative of former foundations.

To make one's way intelligently through this quarry of accumulated débris, the triple erudition of M. Beulé, the historian of the Acropolis, Hellenist, antiquarian and architect, would be none too great. His book fills me with a curious regret; it is that the author should not have enjoyed a previous life in which he might have written the "Voyage in Greece," in the stead of that rapid and negligent tourist, Pausanias. How many uncertain points would be cleared up, and how many secrets deciphered! Antiquity, endowed in the highest degree with the artistic sense, had not the gift of description and criticism; and it is a very great pity, for there are so many vanished masterpieces that would now live in trustworthy pages. Admirable is the sagacity with which Beulé has discovered the sites of the Temples of Diana Brauronia and Athena Ergane. He turns the smallest indication to account, interprets a difficult text without forcing the meaning, questions every stone, reads a date in the way a course is clamped,

in the more or less archaic form of a character, in the depth of a fluting, in a scoring of the rock. He collects these scattered bits of information logically, and while they would tell nothing to less attentive and less learned eyes, he unites them into a mass of convincing proofs. Bit by bit the building rises up and resumes its place in the assembly of wondrous monuments which formed the sacred crown of that sublime plateau; the statues that have vanished or that have been smashed to pieces by cannon-balls, shells, and explosions, reascend their pedestals and there is formed anew, as by the touch of a wizard's wand, the long line of masterpieces past which the visitor walked from the five gates of the Propylæa to the three steps of the Parthenon: the Propylæan Mercury; Socrates' three Draped Graces, — for he was a sculptor ere he became a philosopher; the bronze Lioness erected in honour of Leæna the courtesan, who had faithfully kept the secret of Harmodius and Aristogiton; the Venus offered by Callias, the work of Calamis; the bronze statue by Cresilas, of Dutrephes, the Athenian general who fell in battle, pierced with arrows; the Hygeia, the Minerva Hygeia, a votive offering by Pericles on recovery from sickness, a bronze figure larger than life, the work of

Pyrrhus the sculptor, the imprint of the feet being still visible upon the pedestal, yet in existence; the stone whereon Silenus sat down; the Alcibius Citharadus of Nesiotes, the rival of Phidias; the Child bearing a vase of lustral water, and the Perseus holding the head of Medusa, the one by Lucius, the son of Myron, the other by Myron himself; the Trojan Horse, an equestrian colossus, a bronze imitation of the famous wooden horse, from the side of which issued Menestheus, Teucer, and the two sons of Theseus; the gigantic ram, the butt of the comic poet's jokes; Epicharinus victorious in the Hoplites race, by Critios and Nesiotes; Hermoycus the pancratiast; Phormio, the general, who, before starting on a campaign, made the Athenians pay his debts, — all have been replaced in their proper positions with wonderful intelligence and almost unquestionable probability, partly by making use of the rather obscure account given by Pausanias, partly in accordance with inductions drawn from the aspect of the place.

It is worth watching Beulé moving the blocks of stone, turning them over, studying every side of them, and forcing them to reveal the ancient inscription, which is often next the ground. The statues were

carried away, those at least which were not of a religious character, for the purpose of adorning Nero's Golden House, or else there are but scattered parts of them buried in the débris. The pedestals, however, being heavy and of little interest at that time, were left undisturbed, and they it is which have been examined by Beulé with almost invariable success. By this means he has even been able to correct mistakes in spelling made by Pliny. At the time of the Roman rule, Greek servility utilised the greater number of these pedestals, shorn of the statues they had borne, by placing on them the figures of proconsuls or obscure administrators, simply reversing the marble blocks which had supported the vanished masterpieces, and it is thanks to this practice that so many valuable bits of information, unknown until the present day, have been recovered.

It is upon these pedestals that the young and learned archæologist read the names of Strongylion, Sthenis, and Leochares, the sculptor of Thundering Jove, of the Crowned Apollo, and of Ganymede, the sculptor who wrought the friezes of the tomb of Mausoleus with Briaxys and Scopas. Strange is the mingling on one and the same block of marble of the names of an

Athenian family and of Cæsar Augustus, Germanicus, Trajan, and Hadrian!

I shall not follow Beulé farther in his learned investigations which have enabled him to restore the vanished nation of statues and to people with a swarm of bronze and marble figures the desolate loneliness of the Acropolis, which antiquity had transformed into a sort of little Dunkirk of masterpieces. I should have to quote constantly from his work in order to tell where it was that stood the group of Minerva striking Marsyas, the Fight of Theseus, the statue of Flavius Conon, the helmeted man with the silver nails, the work of Cleotas, Earth beseeching Jupiter Fluvius, whose altar was on the summit of Hymettus, — for to the visitor's eye there is naught visible but a chaotic mass of overthrown blocks of stone, and it takes an antiquary's patience to recognise the mutilated and worn portions in the museum of fragments, a sort of Hospital of the Invalids of sculpture, which is situated under the portico of the Pinacothek.

On the left of the Parthenon, on issuing from the Propylæa, are seen the ruins of three temples, placed one against another without any care for symmetry, and each in a different style of architecture. They are

those of Minerva Polias, Erechtheium, and of Pandrosos, called also the Pandroseium. This curious arrangement is a further proof of the fact that the ancients did not lay as much stress upon absolute regularity as we moderns are apt to think, and indeed that they avoided it in order to please the eye by the non-continuity of lines. They appear to have been acquainted with the laws of intersequence, and in this respect they often bear out the ingenious views put forward by Ziegler in his investigation into ceramics and the principles of ornament. It may be that in the case in point the peculiar placing of the buildings was due to local superstitions which forbade the adoption of any other plan.

Within the Erechtheium was the salt spring which Neptune caused to well up from the ground at the time of his dispute with Minerva concerning the patronage of Athens. Earthquakes and landslips have dried up the spring itself, but there are still visible on the rock-face, through the disjointed flagstones, three marks not unlike the deep scores that would be made by a violent blow with a gigantic trident. In all ages superstition has delighted in interpreting such natural peculiarities as traces of the passage of the gods, and even now in the Pyrenees one is shown the cut made by Roland's

sword, and in the island of Serendib the print of Adam's foot.

The Temple of Athena Polias (that is, Protectress of the City) had its portico upon the side of the Erechtheium, against which it was placed, so that it could be entered as through a side door. The Pandroseium, which could only be entered through the Temple of Minerva, formed a sort of parallelogram with this portico, the geometrical outline of the plan being not unlike the letter T. Like the Temple of Athena Polias, the Erechtheium was Ionic, while the Pandroseium belonged to no known order of architecture, and is the one and only example of that sort of construction known.

I have endeavoured to give an idea of this agglomeration of sanctuaries so strangely placed by each other and assembled under the influence of religious ideas. Erechtheus had a very complicated genealogy, which it would be difficult to explain without giving offence. Vulcan, enamoured of Minerva, attacked her so fiercely that if Earth had not generously substituted herself for the goddess pursued by the lame blacksmith, the bluish-green-eyed deity would have run the risk of seeing her reputation for virginity greatly compromised. Erechtheus, the offspring of this disappointed lust, passed at

first for being the son of Vulcan and the Earth, then, later, of the Earth alone, whence his appellation of Autochthone. Minerva, however, moved by pity, put the child in a basket and brought it up in secret, fearing the gibes of the gods and the Olympic laughter of which the divine blind man speaks. And then, in a way, she was somewhat his mother. In Minerva's sanctuary dwelt the three daughters of Cecrops, Aglauros, Herse and Pandrosos. One day the goddess, having observed that her beloved city was not properly defended on the west, ingeniously bethought herself of fetching a mountain from Pellene, and warned the three sisters not tc look into the basket. Pandrosos alone obeyed her injunctions, Aglauros and Herse were less discreet, and the chattering basket flew off to tell the tale to Minerva, who was returning with her mountain under her arm, and let it fall in her surprise and confusion at finding that her secret was discovered. The mountain is Lycabetus, which may be seen, at the very place where it was dropped, raising into the blue heavens its summit gilded by the sun, and bearing an hermitage. Pandrosos became all the dearer to the goddess; the other two sisters threw themselves down from the top of the Acropolis. Erechtheus dethroned Pandion, King of

Athens, instituted the Panathenaic festival, raised temples in honour of Minerva, whom he might well look upon, if not as his mother, at least as having been the cause of his coming into the world, and he was buried under the sacred soil of the Acropolis.

Thus around the Temple of Athena Polias were grouped, if one may use such an expression in connection with pagan divinities, the chapels of her adopted son Erechtheus and of Pandrosos, her trusty confidant.

The Greeks in the Middle Ages turned the Erechtheium into a church; under the Turkish rule, the Dislar Aga used it for his harem. These beautiful buildings were spared no outrages, until the happier days when the fragments overthrown by the cannon-balls were put back in their places and the outward appearance of the fanes was nearly restored. It is impossible to give any idea of the perfection and the finish which the Greeks lavished upon their monuments; the jambs of the gate of the Temple of Athena Polias, which still exist, some in their proper place, some fallen to the ground, where they may be examined more closely, are adorned with a fillet of pearls alternating with olives, wrought out with the most incredible delicacy, and by the side of which the finest gems seem coarse. Never

did Cleopatra wear upon her regal arms a bracelet of rounder, more polished, more beautifully strung gems than these marble pearls which, to me, are as good as those of Ophir, and which the ages seem to have taken pleasure in rendering more lustrous.

Close by these fragments of antiquity a piece of marble, wrought out with the praiseworthy object of serving in the restoration of one of the parts, showed how vastly different modern work is from ancient work, and this although the copy was mathematically correct.

It was in this temple that used to burn, under a bronze palm tree, the golden lamp chased by Callimachus, the inventor of the Corinthian capital, and that a modest myrtle veiled the obscenity of a Hermes who, incongruously enough, was lodged in the home of the virgin goddess.

The Pandroseium contained the olive tree brought forth from the ground by Minerva during her dispute with Neptune, and under the foliage of the sacred tree, emblematic of the source of Attica's wealth, rose the altar of Jupiter Herceus.

The entablature of the Pandroseium does not rest upon columns, like the friezes of the other temples in its vicinity, but upon caryatids, living pillars, whose

rich and powerful forms support unyieldingly the weight of the architrave.

A capital adorned with ova and strings of pearls, by way of an architectural head-dress, rests on their heads, rich in thick curls and plaited tresses, and admirably manages the transition between nature and the building. The idea no doubt occurred to the artist when he saw the young girls returning from drawing water at the fountain of Callirhoe with their urns balanced on their heads. The arms are cut off, like those of the Venus of Milo, but intentionally, for the projection of the arms would have disturbed the monumental aspect of the figures. The draperies fall in broad, symmetrical folds, like the flutings of a pillar, and are nearly similar in each case. One of the caryatids was carried off by Lord Elgin and has been replaced by a copy.

The Pandroseium is one of the most lovely fancies produced by Greek art, so noble that it seldom indulged itself in this way and merely renewed consecrated forms by the ideal perfection of the details.

It was between this trio of temples that rose to its full height the colossal statue of Athena Promachus, armed with shield and lance, and wearing her helmet, the aigrette of which was visible at sea from Cape

Sunium, as if to terrify the foes of Athens. But nowadays all one sees within the bay of the Piræus are the rent outlines of the Parthenon and the Gothic tower which spoils the right wing of the Propylæa.

Pallas Athene no longer keeps watch and ward over her city.

The Magic Hat

THE MAGIC HAT

BASTONADE in ONE ACT

and in VERSE and ONE COUPLET with the COLLABORATION of M. PAUL SIRAUDIN

First performed at the *Théâtre des Variétés*, April 7, 1845, and revived at the *Théâtre de l'Odéon*, November 30, 1872.

CHARACTERS

GÉRONTE	CHAMPAGNE
VALÈRE	INEZ
FRONTIN	MARINETTE

The scene is in front of Géronte's house, in a public square.

SCENE I

FRONTIN, MARINETTE

FRONTIN *enters.* (*Aside*). — What! Marinette here!

MARINETTE (*also aside*). — Frontin! Who would have thought it!

FRONTIN (*aside*). — The wretch!

MARINETTE (*aside*). — The rascal!

FRONTIN (*aside*). — I shall have to show myself. She has seen me. (*Aloud.*) Good morning, Marinette.

MARINETTE. — Good morning, Frontin. So my good friend is back?

FRONTIN. — I got back yesterday only. I was in the country, on my estate.

MARINETTE. — Why, I thought you were in the penitentiary.

FRONTIN. — You flatter me. But I seem to have heard that for lack of a château where you might the summer spend, you six months did while away — nay, do not blush for it; such a thing may happen to the best, — within the Reformatory.

MARINETTE. — Whence I issued the very same day when, through some misunderstanding, no doubt, that uncle of yours on the public square was hanged.

FRONTIN. — Alas, yes! In company with your sire. He was a worthy man. Heaven envied earth for having him, and so the air had to be put between them. Ha! ha! ha!

MARINETTE. — Let us drop dangerous subjects. What is the use of recalling such trifles? Everybody is apt to be unfortunate, and if perchance among our

relatives we count some of those great minds which are not understood or appreciated by narrow-minded judges, is that a reason for publicly proclaiming it? No; that is not the way between friends.

FRONTIN. — You are right. Let us the subject change. What are you doing now?

MARINETTE. — Nothing contrary to virtue.

FRONTIN. — Don't you believe it.

MARINETTE. — I am merely advising a young lady oppressed by a grievous guardian.

FRONTIN. — Where did you get a character?

MARINETTE. — You insolent fellow!

FRONTIN. — Come, do not get mad. I was only joking. I have the highest regard for you.

MARINETTE. — Be done with your chaff. What is your lordship doing at present?

FRONTIN. — I am in the service of a gentleman in love, confound him. I get very little profit and plenty of hard work. I have to turn my hand to anything. Ah! if only fate had caused me to be born master instead of servant, I swear I should not have taken him for my valet. It is not easy to be a valet. It is a hard trade; we are expected to be patterns of every virtue; many a hero would prove but a poor servant. Masters! I

should like to know what they would do without us, the brutes.

MARINETTE. — That is all very fine, but suppose some one were to tell your master what you say?

FRONTIN. — He would only laugh. He likes me; I have vices.

MARINETTE. — Which are of great service to his.

FRONTIN. — I own it. I am clever, but he is in love, and these two faults each other console.

MARINETTE. — That is the way with me; for of what use could I be to my timid maid were I too simple-minded?

FRONTIN. — You can be trusted to do your duty, Marinette. And by the way, I should like to know what is the motive that leads you, at this unseasonable hour, to roam around this place.

MARINETTE. — Like yourself, Frontin, I am in a position to commit an indiscretion. I commit it. Why do you, dear rascal, prowl round here, your cap over your eyes, and your cloak on your shoulder?

FRONTIN. — You answer my question, and I'll answer yours.

MARINETTE. — You know that you can get nothing from me for the asking. I am a woman of principles.

FRONTIN. — 'T was not ever thus —

MARINETTE. — You conceited fellow.

FRONTIN. — You have a short memory.

MARINETTE. — And you are rude.

FRONTIN. — You are hard upon me.

MARINETTE. — You are indiscreet.

FRONTIN. — And you inquisitive.

MARINETTE. — Sh! some one comes.

FRONTIN. — Why, 't is Champagne, Géronte's valet. What a fool he looks.

MARINETTE. — And ugly!

SCENE II

THE SAME, CHAMPAGNE

FRONTIN. — Hallo! Champagne.

CHAMPAGNE. — Hallo! Frontin.

FRONTIN. — How is Mr. Géronte?

CHAMPAGNE. — In the best of health, and unless some one knocks him on the head, he will never die.

MARINETTE. — He is still quite a lusty man.

CHAMPAGNE. — A little dusty.

MARINETTE. — Well preserved.

CHAMPAGNE. — Full of preserves.

MARINETTE. — Very lively.

CHAMPAGNE. — Yes, when he has his stick and no gout.

MARINETTE. — I stick to what I say; he is more to my taste than many a young fellow who puts on side.

FRONTIN. — What is that worthy master of yours about now?

CHAMPAGNE. — Putting under bars, bolts, locks, and safe ward a very pretty girl; a youthful angel with bright, penetrating eyes, — Miss Inez, of whom he is so jealous that, in spite of his closefistedness, he is becoming prodigal for her sake.

FRONTIN. — Nonsense.

CHAMPAGNE. — In the way of iron-work.

MARINETTE. — A prudent man and a guardian wise.

FRONTIN. — And is he successful?

CHAMPAGNE. — Not particularly. He is not cut out to bewitch girls. He is, to win so fair a maid, too old, too ugly, too much of an ass, and, above all, too much of a miser.

FRONTIN. — Heaven evidently did not create him with a view to his being loved.

CHAMPAGNE. — No one has ever loved Mr. Géronte.

FRONTIN. — Not even his wife?

CHAMPAGNE. — His wife? Not much.

FRONTIN. — At that rate, then —

CHAMPAGNE. — Mr. Géronte was, I can assure you —

FRONTIN. — What in polite language is called "deceived."

CHAMPAGNE. — He was; I used to carry the notes to the lady. She is dead; God rest her soul. Ah! those were fine times! I had drinks galore, and out of the fees earned by carrying the missives I saved a handsome pile, which is in the hands of Mr. Géronte, my master, who, as he desires to retain it, keeps me too perhaps, for he is naturally much disinclined to return money, though he is quick enough to take it. For the rest, he feeds me worse than a sporting dog; deducts from my wages the cost of the sticks he breaks on my back, and dresses me in such rags that at sight of me the crows take to flight. Curse my luck! I was born under a most niggardly star.

FRONTIN. — If you choose to serve me, I shall make you a rich —

MARINETTE. — And I shall love you.

CHAMPAGNE. — No, thank you. I am a virtuous

chap and will have nothing to do with crooked ways; for, did he happen to hear of it, Mr. Géronte is just the man to kick me out and keep my cash.

FRONTIN. — So you refuse?

CHAMPAGNE. —Yes, I say no.

FRONTIN (*thrashing him*). — You rascal, you! you lout! you dunderhead! How do you like being licked? Here 's at you!

CHAMPAGNE. — Help! Help! Murder! Help! Marinette is pinching and Frontin killing me!

FRONTIN. — Fall in with my plans, and before your dazzled sight shall sudden shine a roll of gold.

CHAMPAGNE. — Pass it over.

FRONTIN. — Serve me first.

CHAMPAGNE. — What do you take me for?

FRONTIN. — You scoundrel! You mean to be honest and to your master true. Here you are, then!

(*He thrashes him again.*)

SCENE III

THE SAME, GÉRONTE

GÉRONTE. — What 's that? What are you thrashing Champagne for?

FRONTIN. — He deserves all he gets, and I only wish I had laid on harder.

GÉRONTE. — What has he done?

FRONTIN. — Done? Nothing; that is just the point. An idle servant is undeserving of respect, for, after all, it is quite plain that he is not engaged merely to spit into a well and to cross his arms.

GÉRONTE. — My man idle? Ah! the wretch! You swindle me.

CHAMPAGNE. — Sir, I have finished my work.

GÉRONTE. — Do it over again, then.

FRONTIN. — Instead of staying at home, he drinks at a tavern until he loses his senses.

MARINETTE. — See for yourself, sir. The liquor blazes in his face, and the wine on his nose in red has written: Drunkard.

CHAMPAGNE. — If I am drunk, so are the fishes in the river.

GÉRONTE. — Is it to fill yourself up with liquor that I engaged you, you guzzler?

CHAMPAGNE. — I am still fasting.

FRONTIN (*shoving him*). — The ground, giving way under him, makes him think he is on board a skiff in a storm.

MARINETTE (*pushing him*). — He certainly could not dance on a tight-rope.

FRONTIN (*again pushing him*). — Shall I fetch you a wall to lean up against ?

CHAMPAGNE. — Stop shoving me !

GÉRONTE. — You sot ! You loathsome beast !

MARINETTE. — And while he staggers round in that beastly state, it would be the easiest thing in the world for some gay young spark, light swallow of love, a balcony skimming as day declines, to make his way to your ward's room.

GÉRONTE. — Heaven ! What do I hear ? My ward ! My treasure ! Lovers, robbers ! I shall go crazy. I dismiss you, you scoundrel !

CHAMPAGNE. — Sir, I repeat that —

GÉRONTE. — Not another word, or I 'll brain you.

CHAMPAGNE. — At least give me my money back.

GÉRONTE. — You have no witnesses. So your money I keep to pay for the cost of keeping it. Away with you, you wretch !

(*They all hustle Champagne out.*)

CHAMPAGNE (*running away*). — Help ! Help ! Police !

SCENE IV

GÉRONTE, FRONTIN, MARINETTE

GÉRONTE. — Well, I am rid of that thorough-paced rascal! He may protest as much as he pleases; I will give him nothing back, for how could he, even if thrifty, save such a sum when I pay him nothing?

FRONTIN. — He must have robbed you.

MARINETTE. — It is plain as a pike-staff.

FRONTIN. — The fellow's money is yours. A less indulgent master would send him to sea to write with a fifteen foot pen, and wearing, for fear of colds, a superb cap of the most brilliant red.

MARINETTE. — To go and deceive you! It is a shame, when you are so kind and trustful.

GÉRONTE. — I am sufficiently avenged since I have not to return the money, and I would just as lief he went and got hanged elsewhere.

FRONTIN. — That's right, but there you are without a valet now.

GÉRONTE. — Without a valet, as you truly say. What rank ill-fortune it is for a man like me to have no valet! It is positively shameful.

FRONTIN. — You cannot certainly, sir, with your own august hands, ink the seams of your breeches and beat your own garments in sight of all the neighbours.

GÉRONTE. — No, of course; they would jeer and laugh at me.

MARINETTE. — And who is to grease, at night, your curls all limp?

GÉRONTE. — In what an abyss of woe I have fallen, O Heaven!

MARINETTE. — And who is to come and light your fire at morn?

GÉRONTE. — I am done. Sadness oppresses me. Ah! Champagne, my good, my faithful Champagne, I miss you terribly.

FRONTIN. — He was a fool.

MARINETTE. — A drunkard.

FRONTIN. — A thief.

GÉRONTE. — All that I grant, yet if he stole, I was the receiver, and henceforth it is in other hands that he will put the fruits of his — savings.

FRONTIN. — It is most sad, but since you have kicked him out, think no more of the matter.

GÉRONTE. — But who is to take his place? Ah, woe is me!

FRONTIN. — I shall.

MARINETTE. — I shall.

GÉRONTE. — It is difficult to make a choice between you two, Frontin and Marinette.

FRONTIN. — Sir, I am honest, active, intelligent; I eat but little, and drink even less.

MARINETTE. — And I, for my master, sir, am full of attentions. I warm his bed and his slippers too; I hold his candle for him, I —

FRONTIN. — You are out of breath, my dear. Let me put in a word. If I offer to serve you, sir, it is out of sheer disinterestedness. I ask nothing of you, or but very little, say twenty crowns.

GÉRONTE. — The fellow pleads his cause very well. I engage you.

MARINETTE. — Fifteen crowns and the honour of being your maid will be sufficient reward for my pains. It is for glory I serve.

GÉRONTE. — I' faith, she is alluring; I like her pretty mouth and sparkling eye. I engage you.

FRONTIN. — Ten crowns, sir, will be enough for me.

GÉRONTE. — Then I take you.

MARINETTE. — Not so fast, sir. I care for the

master more than for the pay; so give me five crowns and I am at your service.

GÉRONTE. — It is settled, then, Marinette.

FRONTIN. — Hold on, please. I will serve for nothing at all.

GÉRONTE. — In that case you 're the man for me.

MARINETTE. — I have a better offer to make. You shall receive pay instead of me, and I will give you a hundred pistoles a year.

GÉRONTE. — That is a much better plan. Come along, Marinette.

FRONTIN. — I am willing to give two hundred.

MARINETTE. — And I three hundred.

FRONTIN. — I add the pickings.

MARINETTE. — And I the cast-off clothes.

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — So much zeal makes me suspect something. What can be the object of such persistency?

MARINETTE. — Don't load yourself with such a ne'er-do-weel.

FRONTIN. — My feelings compel me to warn you —

MARINETTE. — That if you engage him you will acquire in him a rich collection of dissolute ways.

FRONTIN. — She has every possible vice, and a few more besides.

GÉRONTE. — The truth is she does look like a real bad one.

FRONTIN. — That is the only true thing about her.

MARINETTE. — All very fine, but pray look at him, with his bird-of-prey eyes and his dark complexion; he is a regular cut-throat; it shows all over him.

GÉRONTE. — Marinette and Frontin, I believe you both, and I entirely share the opinion you have of each other. I hesitate to choose between you; so, all things duly weighed and considered, I still prefer Champagne, and I am off to look for him in the low pot-house to which he generally resorts.

(*He goes out.*)

SCENE V

FRONTIN, MARINETTE

FRONTIN. — The devil is in it! The old goose has flown, regularly scared away.

MARINETTE. — Tell me, Frontin, was I such a fool?

FRONTIN. — Was I tongue-tied, Marinette?

MARINETTE. — I should have seen what you were driving at.

FRONTIN. — We have hurt each other for want of coming to an understanding.

MARINETTE. — I undid your work.

FRONTIN. — And I spoiled your job.

MARINETTE. — We ought to have backed each other up.

FRONTIN. — The trouble is too many rascals spoil the broth.

MARINETTE. — And a dupe is always warned by one or the other.

FRONTIN. — Let us play fair and openly, and talk without guile. You were working a love intrigue?

MARINETTE. — I was, like yourself.

FRONTIN. — You were for the girl?

MARINETTE. — Yes; and you for the lover?

FRONTIN. — Exactly.

MARINETTE. — The coincidence is singular.

FRONTIN. — You were for Inez?

MARINETTE. — And you for Valère?

FRONTIN. — Enough said; let us kiss, join forces, and work together.

SCENE VI

The Same, Valère

Frontin. — But stay, I see my new master, Mr. Valère, approaching.

Marinette. — He has everything that can help him with the girls; he is handsome, young, —

Frontin. — Everything, in a word, save the one essential quality — money. (*To Valère.*) Have you brought any cash?

Valère. — Not a red.

Frontin. — By the powers! Then what is the use of having a fool of an uncle?

Valère. — Speak more respectfully of Géronte.

Frontin. — What touching scruples, to be sure. A hateful uncle who lets the Jews look after you, and resolutely refuses to die.

Valère. — He has disinherited me.

Frontin. — That is another story; in that case let him live.

Valère. — What have you done for your part?

Frontin. — I have thought out a very subtle trick, which cannot fail to succeed.

VALÈRE. — Let me hear it.

FRONTIN. — Not if I know it. I am dumb. Secrecy means much in such stratagems, and the success of my plan alone shall reveal it to you.

SCENE VII

THE SAME, INEZ *on the Balcony*

MARINETTE. — Pray, sir, in this direction cast a glance. It is Inez appearing.

VALÈRE. — I behold the heavens open.

FRONTIN. — The heavens indeed! A sash with bottle-green panes.

VALÈRE. — Dawn shines forth, smiling and rosy —

FRONTIN. — Dawn has come out on the balcony this morning, eh?

VALÈRE. — And makes the rose pale by comparison with itself.

FRONTIN. — I beg pardon, sir, but your style is too metaphorical. You are wasting your time in flowers of rhetoric; now, opportunity is a woman, and will not wait. Marinette, you keep watch yonder, and I at the foot of this wall will give you, sir, a lift to help you to rise to the level of your fair.

VALÈRE. — How can I ever repay —

FRONTIN. — Do that by and by, when you are in funds.

VALÈRE. — Frontin, you are my saviour.

FRONTIN. — Come, lose no time; up with you. One, two —

VALÈRE. — And up!

(*He climbs on Frontin's back.*)

FRONTIN. — Hang on to the railing.

VALÈRE (*to Inez*). — To rise to your level, Inez, one would need to be a king's or a hero's son.

FRONTIN. — All you need is Frontin to give you a back.

VALÈRE. — I feel I am naught and in poverty plunged; I have nothing, I am well aware, that can attract you. But your eyes, at once adorable and murderous, pierce with their glance the stoutest shields. Take not offence at the sighs breathed by poor wretches which these glances chance to strike. Be not angered by my audacious hopes, and deign to accept a heart which is wholly yours.

INEZ. — It is easy to pardon when the offence is so sweet.

VALÈRE. — Be sure my love — Hang it! What a start! I very nearly fell.

FRONTIN. — Sir, you are heavy as lead. Finish up, and for heaven's sake do not be too long.

INEZ. — Valère, I believe your words. I love you, Valère, and I do confess it all too soon, but the constraint in which I live excuses an avowal, which others, less carefully watched, would have delayed longer. It is to such extremities that jealous graybeards force young maids they keep imprisoned.

VALÈRE. — Your frankness, Inez, increases my respect.

MARINETTE. — Look out for yourselves! A suspicious monster is e'en now showing in the distance.

FRONTIN. — Quick! Let Inez bend down, and do you rise and kiss the tips of her fair fingers.

MARINETTE. — It is Géronte.

FRONTIN. — Look alive!

INEZ. — Farewell, Valère, farewell.

FRONTIN. — Now, let the rest of us seek swiftly a change of air and scene.

SCENE VIII

GÉRONTE *alone*

WITHIN what ditch, or against what wall, sleeping off his drink, lies that rascal of mine? O Champagne,

are you dead? Have you for a coffin ta'en a staved-in cask of Brie or Argenteuil? You model of valets, pearl among servants, more virtuous than slaves of antiquity, by heaven brought forth specially for me, how shall I replace you? How without you live?

Why! suppose I tried to serve myself? That would be a way out of the problem. I should order myself about, and myself obey; I should always be at hand when I wanted myself, and I should not have to pull the bell down for me. No one knows better than I do that my morals are perfect and that I have always behaved honourably. So, then, I eagerly engage myself.

Ha! ha! my gay young sparks, if you catch this valet fooling me, you may proclaim it with sound of trump. I shall pocket your gold and hand it over to myself; your scented notes I myself shall read. And to better all, to-morrow, careless of praise or blame, I take Inez, my ward, to wife. She shall nurse me in my coughing spells, and by her side lying I shall laugh at you, poor shivering gallants, seekers of amorous fortune, freezing to death under the balcony in the clear moonlight. And when that precious nephew of mine I espy, with two or three pails of water his ardour I 'll cool.

SCENE IX

GÉRONTE, VALÈRE

GÉRONTE. — What! you here again?

VALÈRE. — I confess, uncle, that 't is I.

GÉRONTE. — Your feet will be taking root in the mud. You remain stuck too long in the same spot, and you will be putting out leaves in spring.

VALÈRE. — I came to —

GÉRONTE. — Very good; now be off.

VALÈRE. — I beg of you —

GÉRONTE. — Begging is of no use.

VALÈRE. — Uncle, I must embrace you.

GÉRONTE. — No, thank you; you are too fond of embracing, nephew mine.

VALÈRE. — Uncle, I have a confession to make —

GÉRONTE. — I refuse to listen to any confessions.

VALÈRE. — But uncle —

GÉRONTE. — May I have a boil on the very tip of my nose if I listen ever to aught you say! I have cut you off; what 's more, I curse you!

VALÈRE. — I love —

GÉRONTE. — You indecent youth! A shame on

your crude speech! Your lasciviousness makes my wig blush.

VALÈRE. — I love Inez —

GÉRONTE. — Enough, sir. If ever again I catch you in this place — Do you see my gold-topped cane?

(As VALÈRE *goes out he meets Frontin, with whom he exchanges a knowing look.*)

VALÈRE. — Uncle, you are violent.

GÉRONTE. — Off with you! My hands are trembling with wrath.

VALÈRE. — Keep cool; I'm off. And now hangs my fate upon the success of Frontin's scheme.

SCENE X

GÉRONTE, FRONTIN

FRONTIN (*aside*). — There is no mistake that Géronte is a fierce sort of uncle. So, unnatural old man, since nothing can move you, I shall teach you a lesson, and trick you in rare fashion. (*Aloud as he comes forward.*) Sir, what is the matter? You look put out.

GÉRONTE. — I am choking with anger.

FRONTIN. — For what reason?

GÉRONTE. — What is the reason that causes a quiet-tempered uncle to turn red and blue?

FRONTIN. — A nephew.

GÉRONTE. — Because, forsooth he claims to be my brother's son, that cursed Valère exasperates me beyond control.

FRONTIN. — Happy, thrice happy he that no relations has!

GÉRONTE. — Under Inez' balcony every day I come upon him, working out some plan, some trick devising.

FRONTIN. — Tulips look well in China vases, daisies are seemliest in the meads, violets daintiest in the woods, iris by the waterside, and wallflowers on roofs, but the kind of flower that best under a window grows is a lover. It may be that Inez has noticed him?

GÉRONTE. — Well and truly shall I hoe and weed the ground. But put on your hat, Frontin; you will catch cold if you remain hatless in the street.

FRONTIN. — If I were to put on my hat I'd disappear from your sight; I'd be eclipsed.

GÉRONTE. — What do you mean?

FRONTIN. — I would vanish in a flash.

GÉRONTE. — What nonsense are you talking?

FRONTIN. — No nonsense at all, but solid truth. Pray look at my hat.

GÉRONTE. — It is fairly napless and of washed out colour.

FRONTIN. — You may add that it is faded, bashed in, filthy, greasy, that time and sunshine have made it bare; I 'll allow it. Yet never on this earth we tread, since those ancient times when men first wore hats, shapeless though it be, bandless and rusty, was there ever one to compare with this.

GÉRONTE. — I have seen hats just as ugly but never any so dirty.

FRONTIN. — Whence comes it, think you?

GÉRONTE. — From the gutter, by its looks.

FRONTIN. — Fie upon you! 'T is the hat of Fortunatus.

GÉRONTE. — That?

FRONTIN. — THAT! It is the hat which makes the wearer invisible. It came into my hands by a series of incredible chances, of events too true not to be improbable.

GÉRONTE. — You mean to tell me that when you have that hat on your head no one can see you?

FRONTIN. — Yes; such is its virtue.

GÉRONTE. — I have trust in you — but find it hard to believe you; prodigies of that sort require full proof.

FRONTIN. — The proof you shall have.

GÉRONTE. — At once ?

FRONTIN. — Yes ; there, look carefully.

GÉRONTE. — Yes, yes.

FRONTIN (*slipping behind him and hanging on to the tail of his coat*). — The trick works. What do you see now ? Anything ?

GÉRONTE. — Where has the fellow gone ? I cannot make it out.

FRONTIN (*still behind him*). — I have gone nowhere ; I am here, in front of you, but invisible.

GÉRONTE. — I am bound to find you.

FRONTIN (*as before*). — Hunt away, Podgers.

GÉRONTE. — There 's nothing the matter with my eyesight.

FRONTIN (*as before*). — He 'll never see through it ; I 've got him by the tail of his coat. Sir, you are running like a deer ; pray spare yourself.

GÉRONTE. — The thing is wonderful indeed ! He is there in front of me, speaking to me, and I cannot for the life of me see him. Where are you, Frontin ? On my left ?

FRONTIN (*as before*). — No, on your right.

GÉRONTE. — This way ?

FRONTIN (*as before*). — No, there. Go on, I'll lock step with you.

GÉRONTE. — Ouf! I am perspiring all over!

FRONTIN. — Are you satisfied? Are you fully convinced?

GÉRONTE. — Quite.

FRONTIN. — Well, then, I reappear.

(*He slips round in front of Géronte.*)

GÉRONTE. — I see you plainly now.

FRONTIN. — Of course you do.

GÉRONTE. — It is amazing! I do not know whether I am asleep or awake. Let me have that hat.

FRONTIN. — I should love to present it to you, sir, but upon my word, I cannot. That hat, you see, is my home, my cellar, my kitchen —

GÉRONTE. — And your stewpan, I dare say. No wonder it is so greasy. Is the soup you make in it good?

FRONTIN. — You do not follow me. When the dinner hour within my stomach sounds, I pull my beaver down over my eyes and make my way into some cook-shop, invisible to all. There, among the chickens, nicely browned, I pick out the best-done one, nobble it, and devour it, my feet on the hearth,

where none disturbs me. Then at the nearest tavern, to wash down the fowl, I drink of the best without paying my shot.

GÉRONTE. — Wonderful!

FRONTIN. — With second-hand-clothes men I deal as with the cook and taverner both. You may ask for my eyes, you may call for my skin, my wife, nay, for my children, but not, not for my hat.

GÉRONTE. — But with that hat on it would be so easy for me to know what Valère and my ward are up to.

FRONTIN. — It is true that to a guardian, in age advanced and very jealous, my hat is worth more than bolts and bars. With such a treasure all tricks are vain. Before the criminal you suddenly arise, terrible, at the crucial moment, heaven knows whence, like a Jack-in-the-box shot up by a spring.

GÉRONTE. — I buy it from you.

FRONTIN. — No, you don't. You are too niggardly. That hat of mine makes me King of France and Navarre, and you would offer me a price most dishonouring.

GÉRONTE. — Will you take a hundred crowns for it?

FRONTIN. — It is n't much, but — well, I 'll take it.

GÉRONTE. — I should like, before handing over the cash, to try —

FRONTIN. — Why, certainly.

GÉRONTE (*aside, as he puts on the hat*). — I 'll make a bolt of it, and get the hat without its costing me a penny. He won't see me.

FRONTIN (*aside*). — I 'm up to your game, you old thief. (*Aloud.*) Ah! sir, it is very wrong to cheat a poor man. I am taken all aback by such conduct; it is atrocious. He cannot have got far off. I 'll hit in every corner in hopes of finding him. I 'll thrash the air black and blue, and I 'm sure to catch him with some of my blows. I 'll hit out at a venture. Here 's a shower for you! Up and down, crossways and sideways, and every way!

GÉRONTE. — Oh! Ah! Oh, my leg! Oh, my arm! Oh, my back! Oh, my shoulder!

FRONTIN. — I 'll lay on so with this wand of mine that I 'll catch him sure. I can't see him, but I hear him yell and groan at every step. (*Aside.*) With a crack of my stick let me break the spell.

(*He knocks off the hat.*)

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — I am black and blue all over.

FRONTIN. — There, I lay aside my arm. I was really worried by your eclipsing yourself. I looked for you everywhere. I hope I did not hit you ?

GÉRONTE. — No.

FRONTIN. — I am afraid I may have raised a lump on you.

GÉRONTE. — I am tough. (*Aside.*) I 'll pay a man to thrash you, you brute.

FRONTIN (*offering him the hat*). — Now let us close the bargain. We can both trust each other; you let go the purse, I 'll let go the hat.

GÉRONTE (*handing him a purse*). — There you are.

FRONTIN. — You happy mortal; now the world 's yours, all but this purse. (*He slips the purse into his pocket.*) You are like the air, you can go in and out wherever you please; a mere man, you know as much as the gods; nothing can be hid from you; in every mind you may read, and, what none has yet done, you may know women. Here is Marinette coming in the very nick of time. Vanish, and I shall confess her before you.

(*Géronte puts on the hat.*)

SCENE XI

The Same, Marinette

Frontin. — What is the matter, my dear?

Marinette (*pretending not to see Géronte*). — Nothing.

Frontin. — That 's not true. Your face, usually wreathed in brilliant smiles, is gloomy as a funeral, and you look as if you had just lost your lover.

Marinette (*as before*). — You cannot lose what you have not got. I am a good girl, and will not be courted save by those willing to wed, Frontin.

Géronte (*aside*). — Who 'd have suspected her of such virtue?

Frontin. — Then why do you look so sad and cast down?

Marinette (*as before*). — For a very different reason. I too soon allowed myself to fancy that I might be lucky enough to please dear Mr. Géronte, and be engaged by him as maid of all work. Well, you know how things fell out, and that is why I am so sad.

Géronte (*aside*). — I am sorry now I did not engage her.

MARINETTE (*as before*). — Now he has no one. Who dresses and curls his hair? Who is there to tie his cravat and find his gloves? I should have taken all these cares upon myself and looked after him as a dutiful girl looks after her father.

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — What I failed to do, I can yet do.

MARINETTE. — He is such a gentle, polite, attractive man.

FRONTIN. — I am not quite of your way of thinking; he is an aged —

GÉRONTE (*aside to Frontin*). — What?

FRONTIN. — Ugly, stupid, —

GÉRONTE (*aside to Frontin*). — You scoundrel!

FRONTIN. — Sour-tempered —

GÉRONTE (*aside to Frontin*). — Villain!

FRONTIN. — Filthy old beast.

GÉRONTE (*aside to Frontin*). — I'll break every bone in your body, if —

FRONTIN (*aside to Géronte*). — I'm saying all that to try her, sir; keep perfectly quiet. (*To Marinette*). So you think well of him?

MARINETTE. — I do; there is something about him so open and frank that delights and enchants me. Oh! how glad I should have been to serve him!

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — The kind-hearted lass! I feel my eyes moisten and my emotion causes a tickling in my nose.

(*He sneezes.*)

MARINETTE. — I hear some one sneeze, but I can see no one.

GÉRONTE. — It is I who —

MARINETTE. — What is that voice I hear? Is it a ghost? a phantom?

GÉRONTE. — Why, no, it is I.

MARINETTE. — Who? you?

GÉRONTE. — Géronte.

MARINETTE. — But where is your body?

FRONTIN (*taking off Géronte's hat*). — I beg your pardon, sir, but you forget that in order to be seen you must take off your hat.

MARINETTE. — Oh! what a dreadful fright you have given me, sir.

GÉRONTE. — Be reassured. I shall dispel your fears with a word. You see this hat? Well, all I have to do in order to vanish or reappear is to put it on or off.

MARINETTE (*aside*). — Let me affect timidity and pretend to be embarrassed.

GÉRONTE. — The situation you desire, my girl, shall be yours.

MARINETTE. — You were there all the time, sir? You heard me? I feel so ashamed, so put out. Oh! I do not know which way to look.

GÉRONTE. — It was thus I learned how devoted you are to me.

FRONTIN. — While we are about it, suppose we try another experiment with the talisman to ascertain what Inez thinks about you?

GÉRONTE. — What would be the good of that, Frontin. I know she does not love me.

FRONTIN. — I say she does love you. Hearts are closed books that must be opened if you would read in them.

MARINETTE. — Do you expect a girl to blurt straight out to you that she is in love with you?

GÉRONTE. — But she has refused my hand a score of times.

FRONTIN. — And you pay attention to such trifles? The real meaning of a young girl's "no" is "yes."

MARINETTE. — Sir, I agree with Frontin. Miss Inez loves you, that 's certain.

GÉRONTE. — Here are my keys, Marinette. Go into my house and induce my ward to come out.

SCENE XII

GÉRONTE, FRONTIN

FRONTIN. — Thanks to your hat, you will proudly as a conqueror read your name in that dear girl's heart.

GÉRONTE. — I dread reading Valère's in letters large.

FRONTIN. — Girls do not care for such feeble fops as he. But here they come. On with your hat.

SCENE XIII

THE SAME, INEZ, MARINETTE

MARINETTE (*to Inez*). — Let us take a turn or two. The weather is so fine.

INEZ. — Willingly ; I go out so little.

MARINETTE. — Valère may be round somewhere.

INEZ. — If Valère really sought to please me, he would cease importuning me. There are plenty other women who might care for him.

MARINETTE. — You surprise me, Miss, for I had till now thought you had a tender spot in your heart for him.

INEZ. — I did accept his attentions with apparent favour, for why should a girl bridle up and get angry because a young and gallant fellow, of attractive mien, does his best to be agreeable?

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — True.

FRONTIN (*aside*). — Do not shout so loud, sir.

INEZ. — I rather liked him.

GÉRONTE (*to Frontin*). — Support me, I am dead!

INEZ. — But ere long I saw that his attentions were but false seeming and mere hypocrisy.

GÉRONTE. (*aside*). — I breathe again.

INEZ. — I perceived, when I got to know him better, that it was my money he was after.

FRONTIN (*aside to Géronte*). — What did I tell you?

MARINETTE. — Shame upon the fortune-hunter.

INEZ. — And to another love my thoughts have turned. A man —

FRONTIN (*to Géronte*). — Now listen.

GÉRONTE. — I am listening.

INEZ. — Of mature age —

FRONTIN. — That 's you.

GÉRONTE. — Hold your tongue.

INEZ. — Loves me for myself alone.

MARINETTE. — His name?

INEZ. — I dare not —

GÉRONTE. — I am blushing all over.

MARINETTE. — Come!

GÉRONTE. — I tremble.

INEZ. — It is — Géronte.

GÉRONTE. — I am in the seventh heaven!

FRONTIN. — Is that plain? Now do you think my hat dear at one hundred crowns?

GÉRONTE. — Frontin, my truest, my only friend!

FRONTIN (*aside*). — I shall go tell my master it is time he appeared to play his part.

INEZ. — Géronte, my guardian, soon my husband to be, who alone now reigns in my enlightened heart.

GÉRONTE. — You dear little ducky, you.

MARINETTE. — One thing is sure, and that is no man knows how to love before he is threescore. Where could he learn to love? At school?

GÉRONTE. — Well put, my lass. But stay; who comes? It is Valère, the rascal!

FRONTIN. — Keep cool.

GÉRONTE. — But he is going to talk to my ward!

FRONTIN. — Well, what of that?

GÉRONTE. — What? What of that? You will make me mad.

FRONTIN. — You talk like a guardian when you are the lover. The parts are changed.

SCENE XIV

THE SAME, VALÈRE

INEZ. — Valère, here, at this time?

VALÈRE (*Pretending, throughout the whole scene, that he does not see Géronte*). — Be not afraid; I am no longer the same, and I do not come, Inez, to tell you of my love. My heart has got rid of such frivolity.

INEZ. — Your speech, sir, delights me.

VALÈRE. — I do not mean to strive against an uncle so adorable.

INEZ. — Adored!

FRONTIN (*to Géronte*). — You see.

VALÈRE. — Much to be preferred to his nephew —

GÉRONTE. — That is true.

VALÈRE. — Who has nothing but his youth —

MARINETTE. — A merit that decreases as time rolls on.

GÉRONTE (*to Frontin*). — A girl of sense, that.

FRONTIN (*to Géronte*). — Let us keep up the test.

VALÈRE. — You are going to wed Géronte!

INEZ. — I am.

VALÈRE. — I am acquainted with a widow whose charms of two houses and a hundred thousand francs consist. Who to such attractions could indifferent be?

INEZ. — A very good match; I advise you to marry her.

GÉRONTE. — The world's coming to an end; my nephew is getting sensible.

VALÈRE. — The match will make me rich, and I mean to turn it to account in order to settle, like a dutiful nephew, my uncle's guardianship accounts without checking them.

GÉRONTE. — That is noble of him.

INEZ. — Can a woman make over her wealth to the husband of her choice?

VALÈRE. — Assuredly.

INEZ. — Then I give to Géronte all I have.

GÉRONTE. — What a fine deed!

FRONTIN. — Mighty fine!

INEZ. — My two farms in Brie, my real estate, both woodland and meadow, my stocks, my house on the bridge Saint-Michel, my clothes, my jewels —

GÉRONTE. — Go on, angel of heaven!

INEZ. — To Géronte I mean to give.

VALÈRE. — I quite approve your purpose.

GÉRONTE. — You dear lad.

INEZ. — If my guardian thinks me worthy of being his wife, once I have my goods on him bestowed, my happiness will be complete.

GÉRONTE. — What nobleness of mind!

INEZ. — And I shall be quite sure that, as I shall then be poor, he marries me for love.

GÉRONTE. — Don't be afraid; I'll marry you fast enough.

FRONTIN. — You will find it hard to make up to her for such devotion.

INEZ. — Shall I have to sign a deed?

VALÈRE. — In order that the gift may be in due form, it is necessary to have a deed drawn up, and Marinette and Frontin shall now accompany us to the lawyer's, as witnesses, where you shall sign.

GÉRONTE. — Better send for the lawyer.

FRONTIN. — Not much; deeds are not signed in a public square.

GÉRONTE. — They are in plays.

FRONTIN. — That may be; but this is no play.

(*They go out.*)

SCENE XV

GÉRONTE, *then* CHAMPAGNE

GÉRONTE. — Frontin was right; 't is I she loves. The uncle wins over the nephew; Géronte beats Valère! They bestow their wealth on me! Thanks to this old hat, I see the world in a new light.

CHAMPAGNE (*drunk, enters singing*).

When under the vine
With a bottle of wine,
Red or white, as the case may be,
I sit at the table,
I never am able —
For a reason sound, as you see —
To tell if it 's sundown
Or morn's pallid gown
That makes it the colour it be!

GÉRONTE (*putting on his hat*). — He is drunk as a thrush at vintage time. Very much drunk.

CHAMPAGNE. — Good morning, sir.

GÉRONTE. — What? Good morning? That is strange. You see me then, fellow?

CHAMPAGNE. — Rather think I do.

GÉRONTE. — Yet I have my hat on.

CHAMPAGNE. — I ought to see you twice over, rather than once only, for I have had a drink, and every man of us when tipsy sees double; that 's a well-known fact.

GÉRONTE. — His words make me anxious.

CHAMPAGNE. — God created but one sun; wine makes two.

GÉRONTE. — I should have been more distrustful of them. You cannot see me, for I am invisible, in virtue of my magic hat.

CHAMPAGNE. — That may be, but this is your back? (*He slaps him on the back.*) Did you feel that?

GÉRONTE. — I should think I did.

CHAMPAGNE. — Here 's that big paunch of yours —

GÉRONTE. — Oh!

CHAMPAGNE. — Was I out?

GÉRONTE. — No.

CHAMPAGNE. — It is n't your head I have kicked, is it?

GÉRONTE. — No! No! Great Heavens! what a fool I've been! I am tricked, robbed, duped like a babe.

CHAMPAGNE (*aside*). — What is he uttering such elephant sighs for?

GÉRONTE. — I have been robbed of a hundred crowns! I have been robbed of my ward! Murder! Fire!

SCENE XVI

THE SAME, FRONTIN

FRONTIN. — What is the use of making such a row? Neither your money nor your ward is lost. Hallo! There 's Champagne. By the way, with a drunken man you need two hats; I ought to have told you. He saw you, I dare say.

GÉRONTE. — May heaven fall on you and crush you! You swindler, you galley slave, you forger, you poisoner!

FRONTIN. — Quite a number of titles, sir; you honour me. There, look, Inez is returning with Valère and Marinette.

SCENE XVII

THE SAME, VALÈRE, MARINETTE

GÉRONTE. — Where do you come from?

MARINETTE. — From a very respectable place.

VALÈRE. — We have had a deed in due form drawn up by the notary.

GÉRONTE. — I see, the deed of gift.

VALÈRE. — No, a contract of marriage.

GÉRONTE. — What ?

VALÈRE. — A contract of marriage between this lady and myself.

GÉRONTE. — I am bursting with rage.

VALÈRE. — We came to the conclusion that love and hymen may get along hand in hand.

GÉRONTE. — It was I she loved.

MARINETTE. — Frailty, thy name is woman.

FRONTIN. — Your part now to bless the pair.

GÉRONTE. — I 'll thrash you if you indulge in more sarcasm.

MARINETTE. — Valère is so nice !

GÉRONTE. — You vixen ! You strumpet !

CHAMPAGNE. — Take me back, sir.

GÉRONTE. — What does the drunken brute want ? A slap ? I have plenty and to spare. (*He slaps his face.*)

CHAMPAGNE. — I want my situation or my money.

GÉRONTE. — I took you in naked as a Child Saint John, and paid you very irregularly very small wages. How did you get that money ? By what crimes ?

CHAMPAGNE. — Sir, I earned it in the days when you were — deceived.

GÉRONTE. — All right; I take you back.

CHAMPAGNE. — Oh! if only Madam had lived longer!

GÉRONTE. — Silence!

MARINETTE. — Do not be a hard-hearted uncle, and forgive this pretty pair with a good grace.

GÉRONTE. — Never.

INEZ. — Dear guardian, we shall love you so.

GÉRONTE. — I won't.

FRONTIN. — Forgive the means for the sake of the end.

VALÈRE. — Uncle!

GÉRONTE. — Nephew mine, you are a scamp; but I am a Géronte, and play my part — I must. I forgive you all.

ALL. — Thank you.

FRONTIN. — (*To the public*). — Now it is your turn to play your part; forgive us; be our uncle for one day, and to this trifle your applause grant, for in all climes and all times it favour has won. It is the uncle and the man, the ward and her lover dear, the tale that ever

brings laughter forth. Birds are we of plumage bright and chatter gay, but different from birds in cage. Authors for us in prose and verse do write, but without being whistled to we learn our tunes. Although we have not taken Molière's name, pray do not treat us too cavalierly; you know us, we old friends are, and you may applaud us without fear.

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THE PROCESSION OF THE SACRED BULL "APIS-OSIRIS"

A photogravure from a painting by F. A. Bridgman

By my granite shape of yore
Passed the priests, with stately pschent,
And the mystic boat uphore,
Emblemed and magnificent.

— Page 82.

Contents

Introduction	*Page*	3
The God and the Opal — To Théophile Gautier	"	33

ENAMELS AND CAMEOS

Preface	"	37
Affinity — A Pantheistic Madrigal	"	38
The Poem of Woman — Marble of Paros	"	42
A Study of Hands :		
I Imperia	"	46
II Lacenaire	"	49
Variations on the Carnival of Venice :		
I On the Street	"	52
II On the Lagoons	"	54
III Carnival	"	56
IV Moonlight	"	58
Symphony in White Major	"	60
Coquetry in Death	"	64
Heart's Diamond	"	66
Spring's First Smile	"	68
Contralto	"	70
Eyes of Blue	"	74
The Toreador's Serenade	"	77
Nostalgia of the Obelisks :		
I The Obelisk in Paris	"	80
II The Obelisk in Luxor	"	84

CONTENTS

Veterans of the Old Guard, December 15	*Page*	88
Sea-Gloom	"	94
To a Rose-coloured Gown	"	97
The World 's Malicious	"	99
Ines de las Sierras — To Petra Camara	"	101
Odelet, after Anacreon	"	105
Smoke	"	106
Apollonia	"	107
The Blind Man	"	108
Song	"	110
Winter Fantasies	"	111
The Brook	"	116
Tombs and Funeral Pyres	"	118
Bjorn's Banquet	"	124
The Watch	"	130
The Mermaids	"	132
Two Love-Locks	"	135
The Tea-Rose	"	136
Carmen	"	138
What the Swallows Say — An Autumn Song	"	140
Christmas	"	144
The Dead Child's Playthings	"	145
After Writing my Dramatic Review	"	147
The Castle of Remembrance	"	149
Camellia and Meadow Daisy	"	160
The Fellah — A Water-Colour by Princess Mathilde	"	162
The Garret	"	163
The Cloud	"	166

CONTENTS

The Blackbird	*Page*	168
The Flower that makes the Springtime	"	170
A Last Wish	"	173
The Dove	"	174
A Pleasant Evening	"	176
Art	"	180

SELECTED POEMS

The Middle Ages	"	185
The Captive Bird	"	187
On a Thought of Wordsworth's	"	189
Caryatides	"	190
The Chimera	"	191
The Encounter	"	192
Versailles	"	193
Barcarolle	"	194
The Portal	"	196
The Escorial	"	203
A King's Solitude	"	204
The Laurel in the Generalife Garden	"	206
Farewell to Poetry	"	207
The Tulip	"	208
Touch not the Marble	"	209

ALBERTUS, or THE SOUL AND SIN	"	215
THE COMEDY OF DEATH	"	283

Introduction

THE divine gift of verse having been denied to the translator and editor of this English edition of Théophile Gautier's works, he has secured the collaboration, for this part of his task, of Mrs. Agnes Lee, who has undertaken and carried it out with care and skill.

To translate any author satisfactorily, that is, in such a manner that his literary quality shall become apparent to the reader, is, in all conscience, a sufficiently difficult matter when prose alone is in question. But when to the obstacles to be overcome are added the peculiarly characteristic features of verse, the difficulty becomes wellnigh insurmountable.

In the case of French verse in general it may be possible occasionally to render, with fair approach to accuracy combined with retention of the poetic form, the meaning of the author, and with it the more strik-

ing features of the style. It never can be an easy task, or one that when accomplished satisfies fully the exacting demands of the cultured reader, more particularly of the translator, if the latter, as is at times the case, is endowed with a literary and artistic conscience. The very character of French verse presents in itself an obstacle that can but rarely be overcome. The total lack of accent, as generally understood, and the consequent dependence upon rime, increase the arduousness of the task.

Then, with all poetry, it is impossible to retain in a version, however skilful and loving, that flower, that essence, subtle, delicate, magical, which, like the down on butterfly's wing, vanishes the instant it is touched. It is impossible, or wellnigh so, to reproduce in one tongue the mysterious and deep harmony, the sweet, elusive melody of another. It is impossible to preserve that peculiar warmth of colour, that flushing of hue which charm in the original, and the loss of which, while it may not be noted by the reader unacquainted with the language in which the original is written, nevertheless so far disfigures the translation and makes it perforce unfaithful. With the best intentions in the world, with the liveliest desire to reproduce in

English the characteristics of the French, with the most thorough knowledge of the idioms and turns of the one and the other tongue, the artist who seeks to transpose from the one language into the other must fain confess that it is after all but a paraphrase — however excellent, however accurate — that has been produced.

More especially must this be true of Théophile Gautier's work in verse. An artist himself in the most precise sense of the word, he was a believer in and an apostle of form. Words were not mere aggregations of letters or syllables, having each and all a definite meaning attached to them and nothing more. They were not simply a means, when assembled, of communicating ideas. They had qualities and properties of their own — intimately, essentially their own — which gave them a value wholly apart from any usefulness they might possess as replacing the primitive language of signs. They were full of colour, they were colour; they were full of music, they were music's self; they were sculpture and they were architecture; they were metal, and they were stuffs of richest loom, — silk and satin, gauze and lawn, velvet and brocade; they were gems and stones of purest ray serene; they blazed with

internal fires; they were refulgent with inward glow; they burned with dull flame and shone with scintillation resplendent. No precious metal, no pearl of finest orient but was to be found among them. Every shade and hue of colour, every sound and note of music was given out by them. They had properties of their own that naught could destroy, and the poet's business it was to discover these, to turn them to use. Baudelaire, whose talent Gautier so thoroughly understood and so well described, said in his poem entitled "Correspondences": —

"Like long-drawn echoes that in the distance mingle in dark, abysmal harmony, vast as night's self and vast as the light, perfumes and colours and sounds correspond."

Gautier did not go so far; he was not a Symbolist, though he did believe in "correspondences," without the feeling for and gift of which, he maintained, no man could be a true poet. Words did possess a music of their own, in his belief, and he has many a time proved the fact in his own verse; they also possessed a colour of their own, and painter as he was he utilised this property over and over again; they had a sonorousness of their own, and like Hugo, he knew how to avail himself of it. But it cannot be said of him that

he used words in the way in which the Symbolists and Decadents used them; he did not force them to the same extent, and was content to bring out that which was plainly or subtly visible or audible in them to the artistic eye and ear. It was the sense of vision which he especially cultivated, never having forgotten his early training in that line when he studied painting. He beheld particularly the exterior world, and no one has surpassed him in his descriptions of it. Here again it it was his painter sense that stood him in such good stead. He had learned to look, and having seen to reproduce. His poems are full of admirable examples of vivid descriptions of scenery and landscape; of vast prospects and of "bits." He has what Brunetière called "intense impressions of art;" he paints in words to a degree and with a power and skill unsurpassed in any other works of the period. One has to come down to Leconte de Lisle, one of his own disciples, to meet with any word paintings equalling his in perfection and strength and vividness.

Now these very qualities make the translation of his poems into any other tongue an exceedingly difficult and arduous task. It is not possible, simply, to say in another language just what he says in his rich, ample,

varied French. It is not possible to reproduce the effects he sought and attained, for English is so different from Gautier's mother-tongue that not the greatest poet could render in it just the effects that he obtained, and obtained by most diligent labour and continual polishing and repolishing of the form in which he cast his thought.

"Form is everything," he says in an article on one of Hugo's dramas, "no matter what may have been prated on the subject." And to the cult of form he applied himself with singular diligence and perseverance, attaining effects so remarkable as to be the delight of the ear attuned to the melody and beauteousness of French verse. It is always beauty he is in search of, for he holds it superior to all else on earth — and possibly in heaven. He admires Baudelaire largely because that poet is a worshipper of the beautiful and succeeds in finding it even in the horrible and the repulsive. He holds that beauty is an end in itself, and he repels the proposition that every piece of literary or artistic work should have a practical or at least a moral purpose.

Poetry, to him, was not meant to be used as a vehicle for instruction in morals, in science, in aught

that was positive, utilitarian, workaday, commonplace. It was a divine tongue in which beauteous things were to be said; a tongue which the vulgar could not and need not understand, but which was comprehended of all in whom burned, however faintly, the sacred fire. He was at one with Alfred de Musset when the latter exclaimed: —

"It is verse I love above all — the language immortal. Perchance 't is blasphemy, so let me whisper it low: I love it to madness. It has this great advantage, that never were fools able to appreciate it; that it comes to us from God, — that it is limpid and beauteous; that the world hears it, but speaks it not."

He thoroughly endorsed every word in the following passage from Baudelaire, who looked upon him as his master: —

"If a man will only take the trouble to examine himself, . . . he will perceive that poetry can have no other end than itself; it cannot have any other, and no poem can be so great, so noble, so truly worthy of being called a poem, as that which has been written solely for the pleasure of writing a poem.

"I do not mean to imply that poetry does not ennoble manners, — I desire to be correctly understood, — or that its final result is not the elevation of man above sordid interests:

that would be plainly absurd. What I say is that if the poet has sought to attain a moral end, he has lessened his poetic force, and it is not imprudent to wager that his work will be poor. Poetry cannot assimilate itself to science or morals, under pain of death or forfeiture. Itself, not truth, is its end.

"The principle of poetry is strictly and simply human aspiration to a higher beauty, and the principle manifests itself in enthusiasm, in rapture of the soul, — an enthusiasm which is wholly independent of passion, the intoxication of the heart, and of truth, the food of reason. For passion is a *natural* thing, too natural indeed not to introduce an unpleasant, a discordant tone into the domain of pure beauty; too familiar and too violent not to scandalise the pure desires, the gracious melancholy, and the noble despair that inhabit the supernatural regions of poetry."

Poems of passion are not to be met with in Gautier's work. He has none that recall the cries of despair and ardour that burst forth from de Musset, the tender regrets and lamentations of Lamartine. He has written some love poems; he has indulged, as young Romanticists all did, in addresses to fair female forms, often as not purely ideal; he has talked love, but it has never swayed and tossed him about on the ocean of passion. For him no Graziella, no Elvira, no Julia appears to have existed; in his heart there was little

room for aught else than the worship of beauty under its various forms; women appealed to him in so far as they were partial incarnations of that divine principle, but they do not appear to have affected him as much as the beauty of statues or paintings, the glory of landscapes, or the majesty of architecture. Music moved him, but the artist herself was of secondary importance. Dancing delighted him, but the dancer was subordinate to the performance itself.

So he never sang woman as woman; he has written that incomparable poem: "The Poem of Woman," but he makes clear his inmost thought in the sub-title: "Marble of Paros." He preferred, we know, the statue to the living form; the statue was more perfect, approached more nearly to the ideal of beauty, it was more idealised, and therefore, in his view, truer to the fact. This he dwells on in his account of Baudelaire: —

"Baudelaire . . . believed art should be absolutely autonomous, and refused to admit that poetry had any end other than itself, or any mission to fulfil other than that of exciting in the reader's mind the sensation of the Beautiful, in the strictest meaning of the word. . . . He banished from poetry, to the utmost of his power, eloquence, passion, and the too accurate representation of truth. Just as one must not use in

sculpture parts cast directly from the living model, so he insisted that before being admitted into the sphere of art every object should undergo a metamorphosis that should fit it for that subtle realm, by idealising it and removing it from trivial truth."

That is his own creed, put into practice by an admirer and a follower. It is the cult of Art for Art's own sake, without utilitarian or moral motive. It is the worship of pure beauty, and it is the thought that inspired Leconte de Lisle, the impeccable poet, equally with Gautier, when he sang the wondrous song of "Hypatia": —

"Sleep, O fair victim, within our souls' closed depths,
Wrapped in thy virgin shroud and with lotus crowned.
Sleep! For hideous ugliness of the world is queen,
And no longer we know the road that to Paros leads.

"The gods are turned to dust; the earth is mute;
No sound from thy deserted heav'n shall e'er be heard.
Sleep! But, living within him, sing to the poet's heart
Of sacred Beauty the melodious hymn.

"For it alone survives, unchanged, eternal.
Scattered by Death the quaking worlds may be —
But forth doth Beauty flame, and all in her revives;
Under her white feet still the worlds revolve."

This conception, this purpose Gautier faithfully adhered to throughout his career, and in face of the reproach,

addressed to him even during his lifetime, that he lost sight of great moral notions. He disclaimed being a moralist, a student of manners, an inquirer into the possibilities of elevating the human race by spreading the principles of philosophy, total abstinence, religion, or anything akin thereto, and desired simply to be an artist, to sing melodiously of beauty, and to reproduce it as fully as he might in all his works.

Poetry was a thing apart; the gift of writing verse was not merely, in his opinion, the power of expressing admirably and feelingly, of imparting the sense of colour and melody, of communicating rhythm and number to the phrase, or, on the other hand, the mere power of riming, a gift possessed, as he has truly remarked, by very mediocre people. It is not enough to align words, to make the final letters of each line repeat a given sound. There is more than this in real poetry, and it was real poetry alone that he cared for or wrote. It involved, not necessarily ideas — commonplace or original — but the bringing out of the subject the fullest measure of perfection of form of which it was susceptible. Form is indispensable, in his theory of poetry. It is the very touchstone of merit; the very test of existence. The careful working out

of the form, at least the producing of perfect form with or without labour, alone marked out the man as a poet. Without form he was only a poetaster; with it, a true singer.

This view gives, apparently, over-importance to verse. Whether it do so or not, it is unquestionably the view held by Gautier. "It is the commonest thing in the world, at the present time," he says, "to assume that what is poetical is poetry. The two have nothing in common. Fénelon, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, George Sand are poetical, but they are not poets; that is to say, they are incapable of writing verse, even mediocre verse, a special gift possessed by people greatly inferior in merit to these illustrious masters. To attempt to separate verse from poetry is a modern piece of folly that tends to nothing less than the destruction of art itself."

It is curious that Gautier, once the contemner of Boileau, had become, by the time he penned these words, almost a champion of the critic's or at least a defender and advocate of one of the principles upon which Boileau laid most stress: the absolute necessity of improving the form until perfection has been attained. Not every kind of verse satisfied his exacting taste;

it had to be the very best, wrought out with infinite care, for it is not given to every one to produce superb, perfect lines without an effort, as was the case with Victor Hugo, who uttered them as naturally and as easily as he breathed. Gautier held to the need of improving the work, and the first cast of the form was not necessarily the best. So the poet must work over his verse until he attained perfection. This meant verse of a higher quality than the average verse of Lamartine and Alfred de Musset, neither of whom troubled much about the minutiæ upon which Gautier lays stress. "When a poet is in question," he says again, "the manner in which his verse is wrought is a matter of considerable importance and worth studying, for it constitutes in great part the intrinsic value of his verse. It is the stamp with which he mints his gold, his silver or copper." That amounts to saying that, while the value of the poem, outside its form, must necessarily vary with the variation in the talent, genius, and inspiration of the writer, in no case can the writer dispense with seeking excellence of form, which is to constitute a great part of the worth of his work. "No doubt," he continues, "these minutiæ will seem very frivolous to utilitarians, progressive and

practical, or simply clever men, who think with Stendhal, that verse is a childish form that was good enough for the primitive ages, but who insist that poetry should be written in prose, as beseems an age of common-sense. Yet it is precisely these minutiæ that cause verse to be good or bad, and that distinguish the true poet from the sham."

The instrument of verse, words, with their infinite capabilities, was therefore a matter of importance to him, and on the study of words and the resources they offer to the poet he bestowed infinite time and thought. Gifted with a vivid sense of colour, with an intense sense of form, with a delicate appreciation of sound, he naturally enough sought to turn to account every word that could be made to yield an effect in any one of these ways. It was herein he differed from Boileau, to whom the separation of the nobler from the more common words was a matter of moment. To Gautier all words were good, if only they rendered his thought. He wished to attain accuracy in expression; to produce just the effect he sought, and not another, or one merely analogous to it. Hence his vocabulary was enriched with many terms drawn from the most varied sources. There are numberless examples of

this in "Enamels and Cameos," though the reader unacquainted with the correct, restrained, stilted mode of speech of the pseudo-classicists may not notice them. And indeed in English these words would not attract attention.

In one of his conversations, reported by Émile Bergerat, — "Théophile Gautier: Entretiens, Souvenirs et Correspondance," — Gautier discussed the nature and value of his work in enriching the language of French poetry, and claimed the "modest praise of being a philologist." He believed he had fashioned, for the poets who were coming after him, a remarkable instrument capable of rendering every shade of feeling, every gradation of hue and colour, every sound of music and melody. He dilated on the importance, on the necessity which exists for thought to be possessed of a garment of words suited to itself: —

"So soon as it finds in words a garment fitted to it, it straightway goes along easily; and if the words be elegant of cut and rich in colour, it grows bolder and triumphant, for when beauteous and fitly attired, it feels that it is more welcome and is received into better society. Then if so be a poet fastens to its feet the two sonorous wings of rime, it takes its flight and soars on high."

This view recalls that set forth by Victor Hugo in the interesting and highly personal poem entitled "Reply to an Indictment," in which he relates the part he played in the linguistic revolution: —

"Then, a brigand I, — I came; I shouted: Why should these ever go before and those behind ever be? Then, upon the Academy, the old beldame, spreading her skirts to shelter the terrified tropes, and upon the battalions of alexandrines in squares, I blew a blast of revolt. The old dictionary I crowned with Liberty's red cap. . . . I stormed and demolished the Bastile of rimes. I did more: I smashed every iron fetter that bound the common words, and I drew forth from hell the old ones, long damned, legions of the nether depths. I pulled down the spirals of periphrases, and mingled, confounded, laid flat under heaven's vault, the alphabet, that sombre tower which uprose out of Babel; for well I knew that the wrathful hand that sets the words free, to thought restores its liberty."

Gautier had this in mind when he said further, in that same conversation: "My share in that literary revolution was plainly indicated. I was the painter of the company. I hurried forth to conquer adjectives; I dug up lovely, even admirable ones, that henceforth man cannot do without. I foraged on all hands in the sixteenth century, to the horror of the subscribers to

the Théâtre-Français, of members of the French Academy, of Touquet-snuff-boxes and wan-faced bourgeois, as Petrus hath it. I returned with my basket full, with sheaves and splendours. I put upon the palette of style every hue of dawn and every tint of sunset; I have given you back red, dishonoured by political wire-pullers; I have written poems in white major, and when I saw that the result was good, that the writers of my kith and kin were hastening after me and that the professors were yowling in their chairs, I formulated my famous axiom: 'He whom a thought, even the most complex, a vision, were it the most apocalyptical, surprises unprovided with words to render it, is not a writer.' And the goats were separated from the sheep, and the minions of Scribe from the disciples of Hugo, in whom all genius resides. Such was my part in the conquest."

Never was Gautier surprised without a word. Never did he lack just the right expression to produce the effect he sought, whether of colour, of sound, or of form. Two poems, among others, in this volume, may be cited as examples of his marvellous command of language, his keen discernment of the exact value of each word, and his intensity of vision.

They are the "Symphony in White Major" and "The Obelisk in Luxor." These may also serve as instances of the absolute impossibility of rendering into any other language the exquisite impression made by the originals and the perfection of form which marks them. The exigencies of English verse are not compatible with the beauties of the French, and the utmost artistic effort must fail to reproduce exactly the infinitely strong yet delicate fashioning of the stanzas, the wondrous variety of whiteness in the one, the glow of intensest colour and light in the other. The rhythm is perfect, so also the rime, and the music of each poem is marvellous. Take these stanzas from "The Obelisk in Luxor": —

"Je veille, unique sentinelle
De ce grand palais dévasté,
Dans la solitude éternelle,
En face de l'immensité.

"A l'horizon que rien ne borne,
Stérile, muet, infini,
Le désert sous le soleil morne,
Déroule son linceul jauni.

"Au-dessus de la terre nue,
Le ciel, autre désert d'azur,
Où jamais ne flotte une nue,
S'étale implacablement pur.

"Le Nil, dont l'eau morte s'étame
D'une pellicule de plomb,
Luit, ridé par l'hippopotame,
Sous un jour mat tombant d'aplomb ;

"Et les crocodiles rapaces,
Sur le sable en feu des îlots,
Demi-cuits dans leurs carapaces,
Se pâment avec des sanglots.

"Immobile sur son pied grêle,
L'ibis, le bec dans son jabot,
Déchiffre au bout de quelque stèle
Le cartouche sacré de Thot."

How is it possible to reproduce by a translation into any other European tongue just the effect attained here? Undoubtedly the meaning, the general idea, the impression of tremendous loneliness and suffocating heat may be, is conveyed, but the form escapes the most skilful treatment and vanishes as the morning mist before the hot sun of summer.

It is plain that the effort to translate a poet into another tongue than his own is to court defeat at the outset, yet it was impossible to present an edition of Gautier to the public without including in it some part, at least, of his verse.

One advantage the translation possesses: it proves

that Gautier was not so wholly devoid of ideas as hostile critics, mayhap deaf to the singular charm of his verse, have maintained. The poems in their English dress interest; Gautier has delightful comparisons, novel views of things, unexpected contrasts, and these are not lost. Further, it is interesting to note how subjects that would never strike the average mind as susceptible of being turned into a vehicle for beautiful verse are after all susceptible of poetic treatment if only a thorough artist takes hold of them. "The Watch," "Love Locks," "After Writing my Dramatic Review," and "A Pleasant Evening," do not appear to be poetical subjects, yet, in French at least, there is an undeniable charm about every one of these poems, and each is a splendid instance of difficulties surmounted, apparently, with the greatest ease.

Gautier's production in verse is comparatively limited. His "Farewell to Poetry" gives us the reason. The incessant demands of the newspaper upon his time and talent, the need of turning out a daily supply of copy that increased instead of lessening, left him no leisure for the worship of the Muse. Ere he entered upon his career as a journalist, he had written more than one graceful and even striking poem. These earlier pro-

ductions were necessarily in the purest Romanticist taste, and the characteristics of that school are markedly evident in this part of his work. Yet, already the great artist that he was manifested himself, and there are numerous passages of infinite beauty, wrought out with utmost care. The subjects are drawn from the plethoric storehouse of the new school — landscapes, reminiscences of the beloved Middle Ages, so much in fashion just then, dreams and reveries, sentimental recollections, sunsets and picturesque effects, shudders and orgies, ghastly contemplations of skeletons and death's-heads, pæans in honour of comrades or masters, — in a word, all the stock in trade with which any reader of the literature of that period is familiar.

The Preface is interesting, and deserves to be transcribed in part, for already, in 1832, he holds to the theory of Art for Art's sake, and maintains the usefulness of Beauty : —

" To the utilitarians, utopists, economists, Saint-Simonists and others who may ask him what is the use of it all, he will answer : What is the use of it ? It is beautiful. Is not that sufficient ? It is beautiful, like flowers, and scents, and birds ; like everything man has been unable to divert to his own use and to deprave.

"As a general rule, the moment a thing becomes useful, it ceases to be beautiful. It becomes merged in positive life; it turns to prose from poetry; having been free, it becomes a slave, — that is art, all art really. Art is liberty, luxury, efflorescence; it is the blossoming out of the soul in idleness. Painting, sculpture, and music subserve no useful purpose whatever. Gems carefully cut, unique trifles, uncommon ornaments are mere superfluities. Yet who would deliberately do without them? Happiness does not consist in the possession of the indispensable; enjoyment does not mean not suffering, and the things one least needs are those that charm one most. There are and there always will be artistic souls to whom the paintings of Ingres and Delacroix, and the water-colours of Boulanger and Decamps will appear more useful than railways and steamships."

He described the contents himself, and in so picturesque, so attractive a manner that the reader of the present day is fain to read every one of the poems thus announced:

"There are, to begin with, little home scenes, sweet and peaceful effects, small landscapes after the manner of the Flemish, quiet in touch, somewhat subdued in tone, without mighty mountains, boundless horizons, torrents, or cataracts. Level plains, with cobalt blue distances; lowly hills up which winds a path; the smoke from a cot; a brook babbling under the water-lilies; a bush covered with red berries; an ox-eye

daisy quivering dew-laden; a passing cloud casting a wave of shadow over the wheat; a stork settling on roof of Gothic donjon. That is all; then, by way of imparting life to the scene, a frog leaping through the reeds, a dragon-fly disporting itself in a sunbeam, a lizard toasting itself in the sunshine, a lark upspringing from the furrow, a thrush singing in the hedgerow, a bee buzzing and garnering, — the remembrances of six months spent in a lovely country district. Here and there, as it were a dawning of budding youth, a longing, a tear, a few words of love, a chaste sketch of a girl's profile; a purely childlike poetry, plump and dimpled, on which the muscles do not as yet show."

The poems themselves are already very well written verse, with the feeling for colour, picturesqueness, sonority, which is to become characteristic of Théophile Gautier. The opening piece, "Meditation," is full of youthful freshness and of the sentiment, still immature, of the brief life of all things on earth. "The Middle Ages" reveals the strong hold which that period had taken upon the imagination of the writer and his contemporaries. "A Landscape" is marked by the qualities of vividness and accurate description which are to be still more evident in the Spanish poems. In "Wishes," the sensation of colour is almost overpowering, and Hugo himself had not

then anything more brilliant and powerful in this line. "The Nightmare" is interesting as an example of the literature of putridity which had adepts and admirers, but which did not long detain the poet, who has made great fun of it in his "Daniel Jovard," in which he used by way of epigraph, the last four lines of this composition. "Sunset" may well have inspired Zola's superb descriptions of the sunsets in Paris, in "l'Œuvre;" and "The View," together with other poems in the same order, is an admirable bit of descriptive poetry well worthy of the writer who was to depict so truly and strikingly scenes in many lands. "Debauch" is peculiar, but very Romanticist. It should be taken in conjunction with the tale entitled "The Bowl of Punch," of which it is a sort of justification, while the last lines expressly declare Gautier's reasons for what may shock many people: —

"It is poetry at least, a palette on which glow innumerable different hues; something clear, unmistakable; something in itself complete. It is colour, song, and verse!"

In later years, in the fulness of his talent and in the deliberate proclamation of his views and beliefs, he will repeat: "I am quite ready at times to have what is

rare at the cost of its being shocking, fantastic, and exaggerated."

The most important of his earlier poetical works is the "semi-diabolical, semi-fashionable legend" entitled "Albertus, or The Soul and Sin; a Theological Legend," written in 1831 and published the following year. It is a strange, weird, and at the close, repulsive story, purely imaginative, and in the same line of thought as the famous "Vampire," which has appeared in this edition. An old hag, a sorceress, a compounder of philters and poisons, a caster of spells, a servant of the devil, Veronica by name, dwells within a wood-covered, ruinous hut, in the neighbourhood of a town admirably painted in verse by Gautier. The description of the beldame's den is superb. Within this den she rubs herself all over, at the witching hour of midnight, with an unguent that removes wrinkles and every mark of senility, and restores to her the bloom and loveliness of youth. Thus transformed, she repairs to Leyden, and there leads the life of the splendid courtesans of the Renaissance, which Gautier always delighted in portraying and referring to. She falls in love with a genuinely Romanticist hero, Albertus, whose portrait is thus limned for the reader: —

"Foreign suns had shone upon his brow and gilded with a layer of sunburn his naturally pale Italian skin. His hair, rumpled by his fingers, fell on either side a forehead which Gall would have ecstatically felt for six months, and on which he would have written no less than a dozen treatises. It was an imperial brow, an artist's, a poet's, and of itself made up half the head; 't was broad and ample, borne down by inspiration, which, in every wrinkle furrowed not by age, conceals some superhuman hope, some mighty thought, and it plainly bore these words inscribed upon it: Force and Conviction. The rest of the features corresponded with this grand brow. Yet was there somewhat unpleasant about them, and though faultless, one could have wished them different. Irony and sarcasm rather than genius gleamed from them, and the lower part of the face seemed to mock the upper. This combination produced the strangest effect; one would have said a demon writhing under an angel's tread; hell beneath the heavens. Although he had fine eyes, long dark eyebrows growing finer towards the temples, over the skin gliding as crawls a snake, a fringe of quivering silky lashes, the lion-like glance, the fiery flash that shot forth at times from the depths of those orbs, made one involuntarily shudder and turn pale. The boldest would have looked down when meeting the petrifying Medusa glance he sought to make gentle. Over his stern lip, shadowed at each end with a small mustache daintily waxed, a mocking smile at times flitted; but his customary expression was one of deep disdain."

It is with this darksome dandy that Veronica falls desperately in love, and though at first he proves recalcitrant, she manages to attract him to her house. He yields to her desires, but as midnight strikes, the glorious beauty resumes her hag shape and carries him off on a broomstick to the witches' sabbath, where the most monstrous diversions are indulged in under the presidency of Satan in person. The Devil sneezes. "God bless you," unconsciously utters Albertus. And straightway devil, witches, demons, sorcerers vanish into thin air, and on the Appian Way peasants repairing to Rome in the early morn find the dead body of a man, his back broken, his neck twisted. It is all that is left of Albertus, and the poem ends with a mocking reference to the morality which is not clearly discernible. But the poet has had his fun at the reader's expense; he has startled and possibly shocked him — he has certainly tried to do so — he has introduced exquisite descriptions, he has indulged in witty moralising that recalls Musset's in "Namouna," he has written much beautiful verse — and he is satisfied. If the reader is not — no matter. The object of poetry is not to satisfy the wan-faced, smooth-shaven bourgeois, the stupid Philistine.

"The Comedy of Death" appeared in 1838, but parts of it had been composed as early as 1831. There was prefixed to it the piece entitled "The Portal," and the poem itself is divided into two parts, "Life in Death," and "Death in Life." The poet has wandered into a graveyard on All Saints' Day, and hears a conversation between a dead woman and the worm that has started to devour her flesh. Returning home, Raphael Sanzio appears to him, and bewails the disappearance of art from the world. Gautier then proceeds into the depths, and Faust tells him that science ends in nothingness, and that naught is worth having on earth save love. There then appears Don Juan, who has known all the joys that love and voluptuousness can bestow upon man, and his conclusion is that love is deadly, and that man should rather seek knowledge if he desires to enjoy real life. Thus the poet is left in uncertainty.

Here again are fine passages, and admirable examples of Gautier's powers as a writer of verse. The subject itself is not new, nor is the mode of treatment particularly striking. The main preoccupation of the author is already to turn out beautiful lines, and in this he succeeds.

The Spanish poems contain many superb pieces, and here one may revel in the perfection of the descriptions, in the glow and splendour of colour, in the sharpness and accuracy of line and contour, in the faithful and intense reproduction of effects. They are followed by a number of poems written at different intervals and bearing upon a variety of subjects; every one of them a model of prosody. And finally come the "Enamels and Cameos."

This is the typical collection of Gautier's verse. It first appeared in 1852, and subsequently passed through several editions. It is the author's most characteristic work; that on which he has bestowed most pains, fashioning each poem with infinite care, until he had wrought out a perfect form. In his account of the "Progress of French Poetry since 1830," he thus states the end he sought to attain: —

"The title, 'Enamels and Cameos,' indicates my intention to treat slight subjects within a restricted space, sometimes with the brilliant colours of enamel upon a plate of gold or copper, sometimes by using the cutter's wheel upon gems such as agate, cornelian, or onyx. Every poem was to be a medallion fit to be set in the cover of a casket, or a seal to be worn on the finger — something recalling the copies of antique medals one

sees in the studios of painters or sculptors. But I did not intend to deny myself the pleasure of carving on the whitish or reddish layers of the gems a clean modern profile, or of dressing the hair of Parisian Greek women seen at a recent ball after the fashions of Syracusan medals. The Alexandrine verse being too mighty for such modest ambition, I re-used the octosyllabic verse only, which I made over, polished and chiselled with all possible care. This form, by no means a new one, but renewed by the rhythm, the richness of the rimes, and the accuracy to which any workman may attain when he patiently and leisurely works out some small task, was rather well received, and octosyllabic verse in quatrains became for a time a favourite subject for practice by young poets."

It has been found impossible to preserve in the translation the form itself, for the reasons enunciated in another part of this introduction. Nor was it possible to reproduce the delicacy of the work in French so that the reader might judge for himself of the merit of Gautier as an artist. Mrs. Lee, indeed, considers her work simply a free translation, and it is in this light that it should be judged.

F. C. DE SUMICHRAST.

THE GOD AND THE OPAL

TO THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Gray caught he from the cloud, and green from earth,
And from a human breast the fire he drew,
And life and death were blended in one dew.
A sunbeam golden with the morning's mirth,
A wan, salt phantom from the sea, a girth
Of silver from the moon, shot colour through
The soul invisible, until it grew
To fulness, and the Opal Song had birth.

And then the god became the artisan.
With rarest skill he made his gem to glow,
Carving and shaping it to beauty such
That down the cycles it shall gleam to man,
And evermore man's wonderment shall know
The perfect finish, the immortal touch.

Agnes Lee.

Enamels and Cameos

and Other Poems

ENAMELS and CAMEOS and OTHER POEMS

PREFACE

When empires lay riven apart,
Fared Goethe at battle time's thunder
To fragrant oases of art,
To weave his *Divan* into wonder.

Leaving Shakespeare, he pondered the note
Of Nisami, and heard in his leisure
The hoopoe's weird monody float,
And set it to soft Orient measure.

As Goethe at Weimar delayed
And dreamed in the fair garden closes,
And, questing in sun or in shade,
With Hafiz plucked redolent roses, —

I, closed from the tempest that shook
My window with fury impassioned,
Sat dreaming, and, safe in my nook,
Enamels and Cameos fashioned.

AFFINITY

A PANTHEISTIC MADRIGAL

On an ancient temple gleaming,
Two great blocks of marble high
Thrice a thousand years lay dreaming
Dreams against an Attic sky.

Set within one silver whiteness,
Two wave-tears for Venus shed,
Two fair pearls of orient brightness,
Through the waste of water sped.

In the Generalife's fresh closes,
By a Moorish light illumed,
Two delicious, tender roses
By a fountain met and bloomed.

In the balm of May's bright weather,
Where the domes of Venice rise,
Lighted on Love's nest together
Two pale doves from azure skies.

AFFINITY

All things vanish into wonder,
Marble, pearl, dove, rose on tree,
Pearl shall melt and marble sunder,
Flower shall fade and bird shall flee!

Not a smallest part but lowly
Through the crucible must pass,
Where all shapes are molten slowly
In the universal mass.

Then as gradual Time discloses
Marbles melt to whitest skin,
Roses red to lips of roses,
And anew the lives begin.

And again the doves are plighted
In the hearts of lovers, while
Ocean pearls are reunited,
Set within a coral smile.

Thus affinity comes welling;
By its beauty everywhere
Soul a sister-soul foretelling,
All awakened and aware.

Quickened by a zephyr sunny,
Or a perfume, subtlewise,
As the bee unto the honey,
Atom unto atom flies.

And remembered are the hours
In the temple, down the blue,
And the talks amid the flowers,
Near the fount of crystal dew,

Kisses warm, and on the royal
Golden domes the wings that beat;
For the atoms all are loyal,
And again must love and greet.

Love forgotten wakes imperious,
For the past is never dead,
And the rose with joy delirious
Breathes again from lips of red.

Marble on the flesh of maiden
Feels its own white bloom, and faint
Knows the dove a murmur laden
With the echo of its plaint,

Till resistance giveth over,
And the barriers fall undone,
And the stranger is the lover,
And affinity hath won!

You before whose face I tremble,
Say — what past we know not of
Called our fates to reassemble, —
Pearl or marble, rose or dove?

THE POEM OF WOMAN

MARBLE OF PAROS

Unto the dreamer once whose heart she had,
As she was showing forth her treasures rare,
Minded she was to read a poem fair,
The poem of her form with beauty glad.

First stately and superb she swept before
His gazing eyes, with high, Infanta mien,
Trailing behind her all the splendid sheen
Of nacarat floods of velvet that she wore.

Thus at the opera had he watched her bend
From out her box, her body one bright flame,
When all the air was ringing with her name,
And every song made her fair praise ascend.

Then had her art another way, for look!
The weighty velvet dropped, and in its place
A pale and cloudy fabric proved the grace
Of every line her glowing body took;

Till softly from her shoulder marble-sweet
The veil diaphanous fell, the folds whereof
Came fluttering downward like a snowy dove,
To nestle in the wonder of her feet.

She posed as for Apelles pridefully,
A lovely flesh and marble womanhood: —
Anadyomene, she upright stood
Naked upon the margent of the sea.

Fairer than any foam-drops crystalline,
Great pearls of Venice lay upon her breast,
Jewels of milky wonder lightly pressed
Upon the cool, fresh satin of her skin.

Exhaustless as the waves that kiss the brim,
Under the gleaming moon of many moods,
Were all the strophes of her attitudes.
What fascination sang her beauty's hymn!

But soon, grown weary of an art antique,
Of Phidias and of Venus, lo! again
Within another new and plastic strain
She grouped her charms unveilèd and unique.

Upon a cashmere opulently spread,
Sultana of Seraglio then she lay,
Laughing unto her little mirror gay,
That laughed again with lips of coral red;

The indolent, soft Georgian, posturing
With her long, supple narghilè at lip,
Showing the glorious fashion of her hip,
One foot upon the other languishing.

And, like to Ingres' Odalisque, supine,
Defying prurient modesty turned she,
Displaying in her beauty candidly
Wonder of curve and purity of line.

But hence, thou idle Odalisque! for life
Hath now its own fair picture to display —
The diamond in its rare effulgent ray, —
Beauty in Love hath reached its blossom rife.

She sways her body, bendeth back her head.
Her breathing comes more subtle and more fast.
Rocked in her dream's alluring arms, at last
Down hath she fallen upon her costly bed.

Her eyelids beat like fluttering pinions lit
  Upon the darkened silver of her eyes.
  Her bright, voluptuous glances upward rise
Into the vague and nacreous infinite.

Deck her with sweet, lush violets, instead
  Of death-flowers with their every pearl a tear;
  Scatter their purple clusters on her bier,
Who of her being's ecstasy lies dead.

And bear her very gently to her tomb —
  Her bed of white. There let the poet stay,
  Long hours upon his bended knees to pray,
When night shall close around the funeral room.

A STUDY OF HANDS

I

IMPERIA

A SCULPTOR showed to me one day
A hand, a Cleopatra's lure,
Or an Aspasia's, cast in clay,
Of masterwork a fragment pure.

Seized in a snowy kiss, and fair
As lily in the argent rise
Of dawn, like whitest poem there
Its beauty lay before mine eyes,

Bright in its pallor lustreless,
Reposing on a velvet bed,
Its fingers, weighted with their dress
Of jewels, delicately spread.

A little parted lay the thumb,
Showing the undulating line,
Beautiful, graceful, subtlesome,
Of its proud contour Florentine.

Strange hand! I wonder if it toyed
In silken locks of Don Juan,
Or on a gem-bright caftan joyed
To stroke the beard of some soldan;

Whether, as courtesan or queen,
Within its fingers fair and slight
Was pleasure's gilded sceptre seen,
Or sceptre of a royal might!

But sweet and firm it must have lain
Full oft its touch of power rare
Upon the curling lion-mane
Of some chimera caught in air.

Imperial, idle fantasy,
And love of soft, luxurious things,
Frenzies of passion, wondrous, free,
Impossible dream-flutterings!

Romances wild, and poesy
Of hasheech and of wine, vain speeds
Beneath Bohemia's brilliant sky
On unrestrained and maddened steeds!

All these were in the lines of it,
Of that white book with magic scrolled,
Where ciphers stood, by Venus writ,
That Love had trembled to behold.

II

LACENAIRE

Strange contrast was the severed hand
Of Lacenaire, the murderer dead,
Soaked in a powerful essence, and
Near by upon a cushion spread.

Letting a morbid fancy win,
I touched, despite my loathing sane,
The cold, hair-covered, slimy skin,
Not yet washed clean of deathly stain.

Yellow, uncanny, mummified,
Like to a Pharaoh's hand it lay,
And stretched its faun-shaped fingers wide,
Crisp with temptation's awful play;

As though an itch for flesh and gold
Lured them to horrors yet to be,
Twisting them roughly as of old,
Teasing their immobility.

There every vice and passion's whim
  Had seamed the flesh abundantly
With hideous hieroglyphs and grim,
  That headsmen read with fluency.

There plainly writ in furrows fell,
  I saw the deeds of sin and soil,
Scorchings from every fiery hell
  Wherein corruptions seethe and boil.

There was a track of Capri's vice,
  Of lupanars and gaming-scores,
Fretted with wine and blood and dice,
  Like ennui of old emperors.

Supple and fierce, it had some dower
  Of grace unto the searching eye,
Some brutal fascination's power,
  A gladiator's mastery.

Cold aristocracy of crime!
  No plane inured, no hammer spent
The hand whose task for every time
  Had but the knife for implement.

The hand of Lacenaire! No clue
Therein to labour's honest pride!
False poet, and assassin true,
The Manfred of the gutter died!

VARIATIONS ON THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE

I

ON THE STREET

THERE is a popular old air
That every fiddler loves to scrape.
'T is wrung from organs everywhere,
To barking dog with wrath agape.

The music-box has registered
Its phrases garbled and reviled.
'T is classic to the household bird;
Grandmother learned it as a child.

The trumpet and the clarinet,
In dusty gardens of the dance,
Blow it to clerk and gay grisette,
In shrill, unlovely resonance.

And of a Sunday swarm the folk
Under the honeysuckle vine,
Quaffing, the while they talk and smoke,
The sun, the melody, the wine.

It lurks within the wry bassoon
The blind man plays, the porch beneath.
His poodle whimpers low the tune,
And holds the cup between its teeth.

The players of the light guitar,
Decked with their flimsy tartans, pale,
With voices sad, where feasters are,
Through coffee-houses fling its wail.

Great Paganini at a sign,
One night, as with a needle's gleam,
Picked up with end of bow divine
The little antiquated theme,

And, threading it with fingers deft,
He broidered it with colours bright,
Till up and down the faded weft
Ran golden arabesques of light.

II

ON THE LAGOONS

Tra la, tra la, la, la, la, — who
  Knows not the theme's soft spell?
Or sad or light or mock or true,
  Our mothers loved it well.

The Carnival of Venice! Long
  Adown canals it came,
Till, wafted on a zephyr's song,
  The ballet kept its fame.

I seem, whene'er its phrase I hear,
  A gondola to view,
With prow voluted, black and clear,
  Slip o'er the water blue;

To see, her bosom covered o'er
  With pearls, her body suave,
The Adriatic Venus soar
  On sound's chromatic wave.

The domes that on the water dwell
  Pursue the melody
In clear-drawn cadences, and swell
  Like breasts of love that sigh.

My chains around a pillar cast,
  I land before a fair
And rosy-pale façade at last,
  Upon a marble stair.

Oh! all dear Venice with her towers,
  Her boats, her masquers boon,
Her sweet chagrins, her mad, gay hours,
  Throbs in that ancient tune.

The tenuous, vibrant chords that smite,
  Rebuild in subtle way
The city joyous, free and light
  Of Canaletto's day!

III

CARNIVAL

Venice robes her for the ball;
  Decked with spangles bright,
Multi-coloured Carnival
  Teems with laughter light.

Harlequin with negro mask,
  Tights of serpent hue,
Beateth with a note fantasque
  His Cassander true.

Flapping loose his long, white sleeve,
  Like a penguin spread,
Through a subtle semibreve
  Pierrot thrusts his head.

Sleek Bologna's doctor goes
  Maundering on a bass.
Punchinello finds for nose
  Quaver on his face.

Hurtling Trivellino fine,
On a trill intent,
Scaramouch to Columbine
Gives the fan she lent.

Gliding to the tune, I mark
One veiled figure rise,
While through satin lashes dark
Luring gleam her eyes.

Tender little edge of lace,
Heaving with her breath!
"Under is her own dear face!"
An arpeggio saith.

And beneath the mask I know
Bloom of rosy lips,
And the patch on chin of snow,
As she by me trips!

IV

MOONLIGHT

Amid the chatter gay and mad
  Saint Mark to Lido wafts, a tune
Like as a rocket riseth glad
  As fountain riseth to the moon.

But in that air with laughter stirred,
  That shakes its bells far out to sea,
Regret, a little stifled bird,
  Mingles its frail sob audibly.

And in a mist of memory clad,
  Like dream well-nigh effaced, I view
The sweet Belovèd, fair and sad,
  Of dear, long-vanished days I knew.

Ah, pale she is! My soul in tears
  An April day remembers yet: —
We sought the violets by the meres,
  And in the grass our fingers met. . .

The vibrant note of violin
  Is the child voice that struck my heart,
Exquisite, plaintive, argentine,
  With all the anguish of its dart.

So sweetly, falsely, doth it steal,
  So cruel, yet so tender, too,
So cold, so burning, that I feel
  A deadly pleasure pierce me through;

Until my heart, an archway deep
  Whose waters feed the fountain's lip,
Lets tears of blood in silence weep
  Into my bosom drip by drip.

O Carnival of Venice! — theme
  So chilling sad, yet ever warm!
Where laughter toucheth tears supreme, —
  How hast thou hurt me with thy charm!

SYMPHONY IN WHITE MAJOR

In the Northern tales of eld,
From the Rhine's escarpments high
Swan-women radiant were beheld,
Singing and floating by,

Or, leaving their plumage bright
On a bough that was bending low,
Displaying skin more gleaming white
Than the white of their down of snow.

At times one comes our way,—
Of all she is pallidest,
White as the moonbeam's shivering ray
On a glacier's icy crest.

Her boreal bloom doth win
Our eyes to feasting rare
On rich delight of nacreous skin,
And a wealth of whiteness fair.

Her rounded breasts, pale globes
  Of snow, wage insolent war
With her camellias and her robes
  Of whiteness nebular.

In such white wars supreme
  She wins, and weft and flower
Leave their revenge's right, and seem
  Yellowed with envy's hour.

On the white of her shoulder bare,
  Whose marble Paros lends,
As through the Polar twilight fair,
  Invisible frost descends.

What beaming virgin snow,
  What pith a reed within,
What Host, what taper, did bestow
  The white of her matchless skin?

Was she made of a milky drop
  On the blue of a winter heaven?
The lily-blow on the stem's green top?
  The foam of the sea at even?

Of the marble still and cold,
  Wherein the great gods dwell?
Of creamy opal gems that hold
  Faint fires of mystic spell?

Or the organ's ivory keys?
  Her wingèd fingers oft
Like butterflies flit over these,
  With kisses pending soft.

Of the ermine's stainless fold,
  Whose white, warm touches fall
On shivering shoulders and on bold,
  Bright shields armorial?

Of the phantom flowers of frost
  Enscrolled on the window clear?
Of the fountain drop in the chill air lost,
  An Undine's frozen tear?

Of May bent low with the sweets
  Of her bountiful white-thorn bloom?
Of alabaster that repeats
  The pallor of grief and gloom?

Of the feathers of doves that slip
And snow on the gable steep?
Of slow stalactite's tear-white drip
In cavernous places deep?

Came she from Greenland floes
With Séraphita forth?
Is she Madonna of the Snows?
A sphinx of the icy North,

Sphinx buried by avalanche,
The glacier's guardian ghost,
Whose frozen secrets hide and blanch
In her white heart innermost?

What magic of what far name
Shall this pale soul ignite?
Ah! who shall flush with rose's flame
This cold, implacable white?

COQUETRY IN DEATH

I BEG ye grant, when low I lie,
Before ye close my coffin-bed,
A little black beneath mine eye,
And on my cheek a touch of red!

Ah, make me beautiful as now!
For I would be upon my bier,
As on the night of his avow
Charming and bloomful, gay and dear.

For me no linen winding-sheet!
But gown me very grand and bright.
Bring forth my frock of muslin sweet,
With many ruffles soft and white.

My favourite frock! I wore it well,
Who wore it at love's flowering.
And since his look upon it fell,
I've kept it as a sacred thing.

For me no funeral coronet,
No tear-embroidered cushion place;
But o'er my fair lace pillow let
My hair droop free about my face.

Dear pillow! Often did it mark,
In mad, sweet nights our brows unlit,
And, all within the gondola dark,
Did count our kisses infinite.

About my waxen hands supine,
Folded in prayer at life's deep gloam,
My rosary of opals twine,
Blessed by His Holiness at Rome.

I 'll finger it, when bedded cold
Where never one shall rise. How oft
His lips upon my lips have told
A *Pater* and an *Ave* soft!

HEART'S DIAMOND

Every lover deep hath set
In a sacred nook apart
Some dear token for the heart
In its hope or its regret.

One hath nested safe away
Blackest ringlet ever seen,
Over which an azure sheen
Lieth, as on wing of jay.

One from shoulder pale as milk
Took a tress more golden-fine
Than the threads that softly shine
In the silk-worm's wonder-silk.

In its hiding mystical,
Memory's reliquary sweet,
Glances of another greet
Gloves with fingers white and small.

And another yet may list
To inhale a faint perfume
Of the violets from her room,
Freshly given — faded, kissed.

Here a slipper's curving grace
One with sighing treasureth.
There another guards a breath
In a mask's light edge of lace.

I've no slipper to revere,
Neither glove nor tress nor flower;
But I cherish for love's dower
A divine, adorèd tear, —

Fallen from the blue above,
Clearest dew, heaven's drop for me,
Pearl dissolvèd secretly
In the chalice of my love.

To mine eyes the dim-worn dew
Beams, a gem of Orient worth,
Standing from the parchment forth,
Diamond of a sapphire blue, —

Steadfast, lustreful and deep!
Tear that fell unhoped, unsought,
On a song my soul once wrought,
From an eye unused to weep.

SPRING'S FIRST SMILE

While up and down the earth men pant and plod,
March, laughing at the showers and days unsteady,
And whispering secret orders to the sod,
For Spring makes ready.

And slyly when the world is sleeping yet,
He smooths out collars for the Easter daisies,
And fashions golden buttercups to set
In woodland mazes.

Coif-maker fine, he worketh well his plan.
Orchard and vineyard for his touch are prouder.
From a white swan he hath a down to fan
The trees with powder.

While Nature still upon her couch doth lean,
Stealthily hies he to the garden closes,
And laces in their bodices of green
Pale buds of roses.

Composing his solfeggios in the shade,
He whistles them to blackbirds as he treadeth,
And violets in the wood, and in the glade
Snowdrops, he spreadeth.

Where for the restless stag the fountain wells,
His hidden hand glides soft amid the cresses,
And scatters lily-of-the-valley bells,
In silver dresses.

He sinks the sweet, vermilion strawberries
Deep in the grasses for thy roving fingers,
And garlands leaflets for thy forehead's ease,
When sunshine lingers.

When, labour done, he must away, turns he
On April's threshold from his fair creating,
And calleth unto Spring: "Come, Spring — for see,
The woods are waiting!"

CONTRALTO

THERE lies within a great museum's hall,
Upon a snowy bed of carven stone,
A statue ever strange and mystical,
With some fair fascination all its own.

And is it youth or is it maiden sweet,
A goddess or a god come down to sway?
Love fearful, hesitating, turns his feet,
Nor any word's avowal will betray.

Sideways it lieth, with averted face,
Stretching its lovely limbs, half mischievous,
Unto the curious crowd, an idle grace
Lighting its marble form luxurious.

For fashioning of its evil beauty brought
The sexes twain each one its magic dower.
Man whispers "Aphrodite!" in his thought,
And woman "Eros!" wondering at its power.

Uncertain sex and certain grace, that seem
To melt forever in a fountain's kiss,
Waters that whelm the body as they gleam
And merge, and it is one with Salmacis.

CONTRALTO

Ardent chimera, effort venturesome
Of Art and Pleasure — figure fanciful!
Into thy presence with delight I come,
Loving thy beauty strange and multiple.

Though I may never close to thee draw nigh,
How often have my glances pierced the taut,
Straight fold of thine austerest drapery,
Fast at the end about thine ankle caught!

O dream of poet passing every bound!
My thought hath built a fancy of thy form,
Till it is molten into silver sound,
And boy and girl are one in cadence warm.

O tone divine, O richest tone of earth,
The beautiful, bright statue's counterpart!
Contralto, thou fantastical of birth,
The voice's own Hermaphrodite thou art!

Thou art the plaintive dove, the linnet rare,
Perched on one rose tree, mellow in one note.
Thou art fair Juliet and Romeo fair,
Singing across the night with one warm throat.

Thou art the young wife of the castellan,
Chaffing an amorous page below her bower, —
Upon her balcony the lady wan,
The lover at the base of her high tower.

Thou art the yellow butterfly that swings,
Pursuing soft a butterfly of snow,
In spiral flights and subtle traversings,
One winging high, the other winging low;

The angel flitting up and down the gold
Of the bright stair's aerial extent,
The bell in whose alloy of mighty mould
Are voice of bronze and voice of silver blent

Yea, melody and harmony art thou,
Song with its true accompaniment, and grace
Matched unto force, — the woman plighting vow
To her Belovèd with a close embrace;

Or thou art Cinderella doomed to spend
Her night before the embers of the fire,
Deep in a conversation with her friend,
The cricket, as the latter hours expire;

Or Arsaces, the great and valorous,
Waging his righteous battle for a realm,
Or Tancred with his breastplate luminous,
Cuirassed and splendid with his sword and helm;

Or Desdemona with her willow song,
Zerlina laughing at Mazetto, or
Malcolm, his plaid upon his shoulder strong.
Thee, O thou dear Contralto, I adore!

For these thou art, thou dearest charm of each,
O fair Contralto, double-throated dove!
The Kaled of a Lara, for thy speech,
Thou mightest, like the lost Gulnare, prove, —

In whose heart-stirring, passionate caress
In one wild, tremulous note there blend and mount
A woman's sigh of plaintive tenderness,
And virile accents from a firmer fount.

EYES OF BLUE

A WOMAN, mystic, sweet,
Whose beauty draws my soul,
Stands silent where the fleet
And singing waters roll.

Her eyes, the mirrored note
Of heaven, merge heaven's blue
Bestarred of lights remote,
With the sea's glaucous hue.

Within their languor set,
Smiles sadness infinite.
Tears make the sparkles wet,
And tender grows the light.

Like sea-gulls from aloft
That graze the ocean free,
Her lashes flutter soft
Upon an azure sea.

As slumbering treasures drowned
Send shimmers lightly up,
Gleams through the tide profound
The King of Thule's cup.

Athwart the weedy swirl
  Brilliant, the waves upon,
Shine Cleopatra's pearl,
  And ring of Solomon.

The crown to ocean cast,
  That Schiller showed to us,
Still under sea caught fast,
  Beams clear and luminous.

A magic in that gaze
  Draws me, mad venturer!
Thus mermaid's magic ways
  Drew Harold Haarfager.

And all my soul unquelled
  Adown the gulf betrayed
Dives, to the quest impelled
  Of some elusive shade.

The siren fitfully
  Displays her body's gleam,
Her breast and arms that ply
  Through waves of amorous dream.

The water heaves and falls,
  Like breasts with passion's breath.
The breeze insistent calls
  To me, and murmureth:

Come to my pearly bed!
  My ocean arms shall slip
About thee: salt shall spread
  To honey on thy lip!

Oh, let the billows link
  Above us! Thou shalt, warm,
From cup of kisses drink
  Oblivion of the storm!"

Thus sighs the glance that sweeps
  From out those sea-blue gates,
Till heart down treacherous deeps
  The hymen consummates.

THE TOREADOR'S SERENADE

RONDALLA

Child with airs imperial,
Dove with falcon's eyes for me
Whom thou hatest, — come I shall
Underneath thy balcony!

There, my foot upon the stone,
I shall twang my chords with grace,
Till thy window-pane hath shone
With thy lamplight and thy face.

Let no lad with his guitar
Strum adown the bordering ways.
Mine the road to watch and bar,
Mine alone to sing thy praise.

Let the first my courage brave.
He shall lose his ears, egad!
Who shall howl his love and rave
In a couplet good or bad.

Restless doth my dagger lie.
Come! who'll venture its rebuff?
Who would wear for every sigh
Blood's red flower upon his ruff?

Blood grows weary of its veins;
For it yearns to be displayed.
Night is ominous with rains.
Haste, ye cowards, back to shade!

On, thou braggart, else aroint!
Well thy forearm cover thou.
On! and with my dagger's point
Let me write upon thy brow.

Let them come, alone, in mass:
Firm of foot I bide my place.
For thy glory, as they pass,
Would I slit each paltry face.

O'er the gutter ere thy clear,
Snowy feet shall be defiled,
By the Rood! a bridge I 'll rear
With the bones of gallants wild.

I would slay, thy love to wear,
Any foe, yea, even proud
Satan's very self to dare,
So thy sheets became my shroud.

Sightless window, deafened door!
Wilt thou never heed my sounds?
Like a wounded bull I roar,
Maddening the baying hounds.

Drive at least a poor nail then,
Where my heart may hang inert.
For I want it not again,
With its madness and its hurt!

NOSTALGIA OF THE OBELISKS

THE OBELISK IN PARIS

Distant from my native land,
Ever dull with ennui's pain,
Lonely monolith I stand,
In the snow and frost and rain.

And my shaft, once burnt to red
In a flaming heaven's glare,
Taketh on a pallor dead
In this never azure air.

Oh, to stand again before
Luxor's pylons, and the dear,
Grim Colossi! — be once more
My vermilion brother near!

Oh, to pierce the changeless blue,
Where of old my peak upwon,
With my shadow sharp and true
Trace the footsteps of the sun!

NOSTALGIA OF THE OBELISKS

Once, O Rameses! my tall mass
Not the ages could destroy.
But it fell cut down like grass.
Paris took it for a toy.

Now my granite form behold:
Sentinel the livelong day
Twixt a spurious temple old,
And the *Chambre des Députés!*

On the spot where *Louis Seize*
Died, they set me, meaningless,
With my secret which outweighs
Cycles of forgetfulness.

Sparrows lean defile my head,
Where the ibis used to light,
And the fierce gypætus spread
Talons gold and plumage white.

And the Seine, the drip of street,
Unclean river, crime's abyss,
Now befouls mine ancient feet,
Which the Nile was wont to kiss:

Hoary Nile that, crowned and stern,
To its lotus-laden shores
From its ever bended urn
Crocodiles for gudgeon pours!

Golden chariots gem-belit
Of the Pharaohs' pageanting
Grazed my side the cab-wheels hit,
Bearing out the last poor king.

By my granite shape of yore
Passed the priests, with stately pschent,
And the mystic boat upbore,
Emblemed and magnificent.

But to-day, profane and wan,
Camped between two fountains wide,
I behold the courtesan
In her carriage lounge with pride.

From the first of year to last
I must see the vulgar show —
Solons to the Council passed,
Lovers to the woods that go!

Oh, what skeletons abhorred,
  Hence, an hundred years, this race!
Couched, unbandaged, on a board,
  In a nailèd coffin's place.

Never hypogeum kind,
  Safe from foul corruption's fear;
Never hall where century-lined
  Generations disappear!

Sacred soil of hieroglyph,
  And of sacerdotal laws,
Where the Sphinx is waiting stiff,
  Sharpening on the stone its claws,—

Soil of crypt where echoes part,
  Where the vulture swoopeth free,
All my being, — all my heart,
  O mine Egypt, weeps for thee!

THE OBELISK IN LUXOR

Where the wasted columns brood,
  Lonely sentinel stand I,
In eternal solitude
  Facing all infinity.

Dumb, with beauty unendowed,
  To the horizon limitless
Spreads earth's desert like a shroud
  Stained by yellow suns that press.

While above it, blue and clean,
  Is another desert cast —
Sky where cloud is never seen,
  Pure, implacable, and vast.

And the Nile's great water-course
  Glazed with leaden pellicle
Wrinkled by the river-horse
  Gleameth dead, unlustreful.

All about the flaming isles,
  By a turbid water spanned,
Hot, rapacious crocodiles
  Swoon and sob upon the sand.

Perching motionless, alone,
Ibis, bird of classic fame,
From a carven slab of stone
Reads the moon-god's sacred name.

Jackals howl, hyenas grin,
Famished hawks descend and cry.
Down the heavy air they spin,
Commas black against the sky.

These the sounds of solitude,
Where the sphinxes yawn and doze,
Dull and passionless of mood,
Weary of their endless pose.

Child of sand's reflected shine,
And of sun-rays fiercely bent,
Is there ennui like to thine,
Spleen of luminous Orient?

Thou it was cried "Halt!" of yore
To satiety of kings.
Thou hast crushed me more and more
With thine awful weight of wings.

Here no zephyr of the sea
Wipes the tears from skies that fill.
Time himself leans wearily
On the palaces long still.

Naught shall touch the features terse
Of this dull, eternal spot.
In this changing universe,
Only Egypt changeth not!

When the ennui never ends,
And I yearn a friend to hold,
I've the fellahs, mummies, friends,
Of the dynasties of old.

I behold a pillar pale,
Or a chipped Colossus note,
Watch a distant, gleaming sail
Up and down the Nile afloat.

Oh, to seek my brother's side,
In a Paris wondrous, grand,
With his stately form to bide,
In the public place to stand!

For he looks on living men,
And they scan his pictures wrought
By an hieratic pen,
To be read by vision-thought.

Fountains fair as amethyst
On his granite lightly pour
All their irisated mist.
He is growing young once more.

Ah! yet he and I had birth
From Syene's veins of red.
But I keep my spot of earth.
He is living. I am dead.

VETERANS OF THE OLD GUARD

(December 15)

Driven by ennui from my room,
I walked along the Boulevard.
'T was in December's mist and gloom.
A bitter wind was blowing hard.

And there I saw — strange thing to see! —
In drizzle and in daylight drear,
From out their dark abodes let free,
Dim, spectral shadow-shapes appear.

Yet 't is by night's uncanny hours,
By pallid German moonbeams cast
On old dilapidated towers,
That ghosts are wont to wander past.

It is by night's effulgent star
In dripping robes that elves intrigue
To bear beneath the nenuphar
Their dancer dead of his fatigue.

At night's mysterious tide hath been
The great review — of ballad writs —
Wherein the Emperor, dimly seen,
Numbered the shades of Austerlitz.

But phantoms near the *Gymnase?* — yea,
And wet and miry phantoms, too,
And close to the *Variétés,*
And not a shroud to trick the view!

With yellow teeth and stainèd dress,
And mossy skull and piercèd shoon,
Paris — Montmartre — behold it press, —
Death in the very light of noon!

Ah, 't is a picture to be seen!
Three veteran ghosts in uniform
Of the Old Guard, and, spare and lean,
Two ghost-hussars in daylight's storm.

The lithograph, you would surmise,
Wherein one ray shines down upon
The dead, that Raffet deifies,
That pass and shout "Napoleon!"

No dead are these, whom nightly drum
  May rouse to battle fires that burn,
But stragglers of the Old Guard, come
  To celebrate the grand return!

Since fighting in the fight supreme,
  One has grown thin, another stout;
The coats that fitted once now seem
  Too small, too loose, or draggled out.

O epic rags! O tatters light,
  Starred with a cross! Heroic things
Of ridicule, ye gleam more bright,
  More beautiful than robes of kings!

Limp feathers fluttering adorn
  The tawny colbacks worn and grim.
The bullet and the moth have torn
  And riddled well the dolmans dim.

Their leathern breeches loosely hang
  In furrows on their lank thigh-bones,
Their rusty sabres drag and clang,
  As heavily they scrape the stones.

Or some round belly firm and fat,
  Squeezed tight in tether labour-donned,
Makes mirth and jest to chuckle at —
  Old hero quaint and cheveroned!

But do not mock and jeer, my lad.
  Salute him, rather, and, believe,
Achilles he, of Iliad
  That Homer's self could not conceive.

Respect these men with battle signs
  That twenty skies have painted brown;
Their scars that lengthen out the lines
  Of wrinkles age has written down;

Their skin whose colour deep and dun,
  Bared to the fronts of many foes,
Tells us of Egypt's burning sun;
  Their locks that tell of Russia's snows.

And if they shake, no longer strong?
  Ah! Beresina's wind was cold.
And if they limp? The way was long,
  From Cairo unto Vilna told.

If they be stiff? They 'd but a flag
For sheet to hold their bodies warm.
And if a sleeve be loose, poor rag?
'T is that a bullet tore an arm.

Mock not these veteran shapes bizarre,
At whom the urchin laughs and gapes.
They were the day, of which we are
The evening, and the night, perhaps, —

Remembering if we forget —
Red lancer, grenadier in blue,
With faces to the Column set,
As to their only altar true.

There, proud of pain each scar denotes,
And of long miseries gone by,
They feel beneath their shabby coats
The heart of France beat mightily.

And so our smiles are steeped in tears,
Seeing this holy carnival,
This picture wan that reappears,
Like morning after midnight's ball.

And, cleaving heaven its own to claim,
Wide the Grand Army's eagle spreads
Its golden wings, like glory's flame,
Above their dear and hallowed heads.

SEA-GLOOM

The sea-gulls restless gleam and glance,
The mad white coursers cleave the length
Of ocean as they rear and prance
And toss their manes in stormy strength.

The day is ending. Raindrops choke
The sunset furnaces. The gloom
Brings the great steamboat spitting smoke,
And beating down its long black plume.

And I, more wan than heaven wide,
For land of soot and fog am bound,
For land of smoke and suicide —
And right good weather have I found!

How eagerly I now would pierce
The gulf that groweth wild and hoar!
The vessel rocks. The waves are fierce.
The salt wind freshens more and more.

Ah! bitter is my soul's unrest.
The very ocean sighing heaves
In pity its unhopeful breast,
Like some good friend that knows and grieves.

Let be — lost love's despair supreme!
  Let be — illusions fair that rose
And fell from pedestals of dream!
  One leap! The dark wet ridges close.

Away! ye sufferings gone by,
  That evermore returning brood,
And press the wounds that sleeping lie,
  To make them weep afresh their blood.

Away! regret, whose crimson heart
  Hath seven swords. Yea, One, maybe,
Doth know the anguish and the smart —
  Mother of Seven Sorrows, She!

Each ghostly grief sinks down the vast,
  And struggles with the waves that throb
To close about it, and at last
  Drown it forever with a sob.

Soul's ballast, treasures of life's hand,
  Sink! and we'll wreck together down.
Pale on the pillow of the sand
  I'll rest me well at evening brown.

But, now, a woman, as I gaze,
  Sits in the bridge's darker nook,
A woman, who doth sweetly raise
  Her eyes to mine in one long look.

'T is Sympathy with outstretched arms,
  Who smileth to me through the gray
Of dusk with all her thousand charms.
  Hail, azure eyes! Green sea, away!

The sea-gulls restless gleam and glance.
  The mad white coursers cleave the length
Of Ocean as they rear and prance
  And toss their manes in stormy strength.

TO A ROSE-COLOURED GOWN

How I love you in the robes
That disrobe so well your charms!
Your dear breasts, twin ivory globes,
And your bare sweet pagan arms.

Frail as frailest wing of bee,
Fresher than the heart of rose,
All the fabric delicate, free,
Round your body gleams and glows,

Till from skin to silken thread,
Silver shivers lightly win,
And the rosy gown have shed
Roses on the creamy skin.

Whence have you the mystic thing,
Made of very flesh of you,
Living mesh to mix and cling
With your glorious body's hue?

Did you take it from the rud
Of the dawn? From Venus' shell?
From a breast-flower nigh to bud?
From a rose about to swell?

Doth the texture have its dye
From some blushing bashfulness?
No — your portraits do not lie —
Beauty beauty's form shall guess!

Down you cast your garment fair,
Art-dreamed, sweet Reality,
Like Borghese's princess, rare
For Canova's mastery!

Ah! the folds are lips of fire
Sweeping round your lovely form
In a folly of desire,
With a weft of kisses warm!

THE WORLD'S MALICIOUS

Ah, little one, the world 's malicious!
With mocking smiles thy beauty greeting.
It says that in thy breast capricious
A watch, and not a heart, is beating.

Yet like the sea thy breast is swelling
With all the wild, tumultuous power
A tide of blood sends pulsing, welling,
Beneath thy flesh in life's young hour.

Ah, little one, the world is spiteful!
It says thy vivid eyes are fooling,
And that they have their charm delightful
From faithful, diplomatic schooling.

Yet on thy lashes' shifting curtain
An iridescent tear-drop trembles,
Like dew unbidden and uncertain,
That no well-water's gleam resembles.

Ah, little one, the world reviles thee!
It says thou hast no spirit's favour,
That verse, which seemingly beguiles thee,
Hath unto thee a Sanskrit savour.

Yet to thy crimson lips inviting,
Intelligence's bee of laughter,
At every flash of wit alighting,
Allures and gleams, and lingers after.

Ah, little one, I know the trouble!
Thou lovest me. The world, it guesses.
Leave me, and hear its praises bubble: —
"*What heart, what spirit, she possesses!*"

INES DE LAS SIERRAS

To PETRA CAMARA

In Spain, as Nodier's pen has told,
Three officers in night's mid hours
Came on a castle dark and old,
With sunken eaves and mouldering towers,

A true Anne Radcliffe type it was,
With ruined halls and crumbling rooms
And windows graven by the claws
Of Goya's bats that ranged the glooms.

Now while they feasted, gazed upon
By ancient portraits standing guard
In their ancestral frames, anon
A sudden cry rang thitherward.

Forth from a distant corridor
That many a moonbeam's pallid hue
Fretted fantastically o'er,
A wondrous phantom sped in view.

With bodice high and hair comb-tipped,
A woman, running, dancing, hied.
Adown the dappled gloom she dipped,—
An iridescent form descried.

A languid, dead, voluptuous mood
Filled every act's abandon brief,
Till at the door she stopped, and stood
Sinister, lovely past belief.

Her raiment crumpled in the tomb
Showed here and there a spangle's foil.
At every start a faded bloom
Dropped petals in her hair's black coil.

A dull scar crossed her bloodless throat,
As of a knife. Like rattle chill
Of teeth, her castanets she smote
Full in their faces awed and still.

Ah, poor bacchante, sad of grace!
So wild the sweetness of her spell,
The curvèd lips in her white face
Had lured a saint from heaven to hell!

Like darkling birds her eyelashes
Upon her cheek lay fluttering light.
Her kirtle's swinging cadences
Displayed her limbs of lustrous white.

She bowed amid a mist of gyres,
And with her hand, as dancers may,
Like flowers she gathered up desires,
And grouped them in a bright bouquet.

Was it a wraith or woman seen,
A thing of dreams, or blood and flesh,
The flame that burst from out the sheen
Of beauty's undulating mesh?

It was a phantom of the past,
It was the Spain of olden keep,
Who, at the sound of cheer at last,
Upbounded from her icy sleep,

In one bolero mad, supreme,
Rough-resurrected, powerful,
Showing beneath her kirtle's gleam
The ribbon wrested from the bull.

About her throat the scar of red
The deathblow was, dealt silently
Unto a generation dead
By every new-born century.

I saw this self-same phantom fleet,
All Paris ringing with her praise,
When soft, diaphanous, mystic, sweet,
La Petra Camara held its gaze, —

Closing her eyes with languor rare,
Impassive, passionate of art,
And, like the murdered Ines fair,
Dancing, a dagger in her heart.

ODELET

AFTER ANACREON

POET of her face divine,
Curb this over-zeal of thine!
Doves wing frighted from the ground
At a step's too sudden sound,
And her passion is a dove,
Frighted by too bold a love.
Mute as marble Hermes wait
By the blooming hawthorn-gate.
Thou shalt see her wings expand,
She shall flutter to thy hand.
On thy forehead thou shalt know
Something like a breath of snow,
Or of pinions pure that beat
In a whirl of whiteness sweet.
And the dove, grown venturesome,
Shall upon thy shoulder come,
And its rosy beak shall sip
From the nectar of thy lip.

SMOKE

Beneath yon tree sits humble
A squalid, hunchbacked house,
With roof precipitous,
And mossy walls that crumble.

Bolted and barred the shanty.
But from its must and mould,
Like breath of lips in cold,
Comes respiration scanty.

A vapour upward welling,
A slender, silver streak,
To God bears tidings meek
Of the soul in the little dwelling.

APOLLONIA

Fair Apollonia, name august,
Greek echo of the sacred vale,
Great name whose harmonies robust
Thee as Apollo's sister hail!

Struck with the plectrum on the lyre,
And in melodious beauty sung,
Brighter than love's and glory's fire,
It resonant rings upon the tongue.

At such a classic sound as this,
The elves plunge down their German lake.
Alone the Delphian worthy is
So lustreful a name to take, —

Pythia! when in her flowing dress
She mounts her place with feet unshod,
And, priestess white and prophetess,
Wistful awaits the tardy god.

THE BLIND MAN

A BLIND man walks without the gate,
Wild-staring as an owl by day,
Fumbling his flute betimes and late,
Along the way.

He pipeth, weary wretch and worn,
A roundel shrill and obsolete.
The spectre of a dog forlorn
Attends his feet.

For him the days go lustreless.
Invisible life with beat and roar
He heareth like a torrent press
Around, before.

What strange chimeras haunt his head?
And on his mind's bedarkened space,
What characters unheard, unread,
Doth fancy trace?

Thus down Venetian leads of doom,
Wan prisoners ensepulchred
In palpable, undying gloom
Have graven their word.

And yet perchance when life's last spark
Death speeds unto eternal night,
The tomb-bred soul, within the dark,
Shall see the light.

SONG

In April earth is white and rose
  Like youth and love, now tendering
Her smiles, now fearful to disclose
  Her virgin heart unto the Spring.

In June, a little pale and worn,
  And full at heart of vague desire,
She hideth in the yellow corn,
  With sunburned Summer to respire.

In August, wild Bacchante, she
  Her bosom bares to Autumn shapes,
And on the tiger-skin flung free,
  Draws forth the purple blood of grapes.

And in December, shrivelled, old,
  Bepowdered white from foot to head,
In dream she wakens Winter cold,
  That sleeps beside her in her bed.

WINTER FANTASIES

I

Red of nose and white of face,
Bent his desk of ice before,
Winter doth his theme retrace
In the season's quatuor, —

Beating measure and the ground
With a frozen foot for us,
Singing with uncertain sound
Olden tunes and tremulous.

And as Haendel's wig sublime
Trembling shook its powder, oft
Flutter as he taps his time
Snow-flakes in a flurry soft.

II

In the Tuileries fount the swan
Meets the ice, and all the trees,
As in land of fairies wan,
Are bedecked with filigrees.

Flowers of frost in vases low
Stand unquickened and unstirred,
And we trace upon the snow
Starrèd footsteps of a bird.

Where with lightest raiment spanned,
Venus was with Phocion met,
Now has Winter's hoary hand
Clodion's "Chilly Maiden" set.

III

Women pass in ermine dress,
Sable, too, and miniver,
And the shivering goddesses
Haste to don the fashion's fur.

Venus of the Brine comes forth,
In her hooded mantle's fluff.
Flora, blown by breezes North,
Hides her fingers in her muff.

And the shepherdesses round
Of Coustou and Coysevox,
Finding scarves too light have wound
Furs about their throats of snow.

IV

Heavy doth the North bedrape
  Paris mode from foot to top,
As o'er fair Athenian shape
  Scythian should a bearskin drop.

Over winter's garments meet,
  Everywhere we see the fur,
Flung with Russian pomp, and sweet
  With the fragrant vetiver.

Pleasure's laughing glances feast
  Far amid the statues, where
From the bristles of a beast
  Bursts a Venus torso fair!

V

If you venture hitherward,
With a tender veil to cheat
Glances over-daring, guard
Well your Andalusian feet!

Snow shall fashion like a frame
On your foot's impression rare,
Signing with each step your name
On the carpet soft and vair.

Thus were surly master led
To the hidden trysting-place,
Where his Psyche, faintly red,
Were beheld in Love's embrace.

THE BROOK

NEAR a great water's waste
A brook mid rock and spar
Came bubbling up in haste,
As though to travel far.

It sang: "What joy to rise!
'T was dismal under ground.
I mirror now the skies.
My banks with green abound.

"Forget-me-nots — how fair!
Beseech me from the grass;
Wings frolic in the air,
And graze me as they pass.

"I yet shall be — who knows? —
A river winding down,
And greeting as it flows
Valley and cliff and town.

"I 'll broider with my spray
Stone bridge and granite quay,
And bear great ships away
Unto the long wide sea."

So planned it, babbling by,
As water boiling fast
Within a basin high,
To top its brim at last.

Cradle by tomb is crossed.
Giants are early dead.
Scarce born, the brook was lost
Within a lake's deep bed.

TOMBS AND FUNERAL PYRES

No grim cadaver set its flaw
In happy days of pagan art,
And man, content with what he saw,
Stripped not the veil from beauty's heart.

No form once loved that buried lay,
A hideous spectre to appal,
Dropped bit by bit its flesh away,
As one by one our garments fall;

Or, when the days had drifted by
And sundered shrank the vaulted stones,
Showed naked to the daring eye
A motley heap of rattling bones.

But, rescued from the funeral pyre,
Life's ashen, light residuum
Lay soft, and, spent the cleansing fire,
The urn held sweet the body's sum, —

The sum of all that earth may claim
  Of the soul's butterfly, soul passed, —
All that is left of spended flame
  Upon the tripod at the last.

Between acanthus leaves and flowers
  In the white marble gaily went
Loves and bacchantes all the hours,
  Dancing about the monument.

At most, a little Genius wild
  Trampled a flame out in the gloom,
And art's harmonious flowering smiled
  Upon the sadness of the tomb.

The tomb was then a pleasant place.
  As bed of child that slumbereth,
With many a fair and laughing grace
  The joy of life surrounded death.

Then death concealed its visage gaunt,
  Whose sockets deep, and sunken nose,
And railing mouth our spirits haunt,
  Past any dream that horror shows.

The monster in flesh raiment clad
  Hid deep its spectral form uncouth,
And virgin glances, beauty-glad,
  Sped frankly to the naked youth.

'Twas only at Trimalchio's board
  A little skeleton made sign,
An ivory plaything unabhorred,
  To bid the feasters to the wine.

Gods, whom Art ever must avow,
  Ruled the marmoreal sky's demesne.
Olympus yields to Calvary, now;
  Jupiter to the Nazarene!

Voices are calling, "Pan is dead!
  Dusk deepeneth within, without.
On the black sheet of sorrow spread,
  The whitened skeleton gleams out.

It glideth to the headstone bare,
  And signs it with a paraph wild,
And hangs a wreath of bones to glare
  Upon the charnel death-defiled.

It lifts the coffin-lid and quaffs
The musty air, and peers within,
Displays a ring of ribs, and laughs
Forever with its awful grin.

It urges unto Death's fleet dance
The Emperor, the Pope, the King,
And makes the pallid steed to prance,
And low the doughty warrior fling; —

Behind the courtesan steals up,
And makes wry faces in her glass;
Drinks from the sick man's trembling cup;
Delves in the miser's golden mass.

Above the team it whirls the thong,
With bone for goad to hurry it,
Follows the plowman's way along,
And guides the furrows to a pit.

It comes, the uninvited guest,
And lurks beneath the banquet chair,
Unseen from the pale bride to wrest
Her little silken garter fair.

The number swells: the young give hand
Unto the old, and none may flee.
The irresistible saraband
Compelleth all humanity.

Forth speeds the tall, ungainly fright,
Playing the rebeck, dancing mad,
Against the dark a frame of white,
As Holbein drew it — horror-sad; —

Or if the times be frivolous,
Trusses the shroud about its hips:
Then like a Cupid mischievous,
Across the ballet-room it skips,

And unto carven tombs it flies,
Where marchionesses rest demure,
Weary of love, in exquisite guise,
In chapels dim and pompadour.

But hide thy hideous form at last,
Worm-eaten actor! Long enough
In death's wan melodrama cast,
Thou 'st played thy part without rebuff.

Come back, come back, O ancient Art!
And cover with thy marble's gleam
This Gothic skeleton! Each part
Consume, ye flames of fire supreme!

If man be then a creature made
In God's own image, to aspire,
When shattered must the image fade,
Let the lone fragments feed the fire!

Immortal form! Rise thou in flame
Again to beauty's fount of bloom
Let not thy clay endure the shame,
The degradation of the tomb!

BJORN'S BANQUET

Bjorn, odd and lonely cenobite,
High on a barren rock's plateau,
Far out of time's and the world's sight,
Dwells in a castle none may know.

No modern thought may violate
His darkened and secluded hall.
Bjorn bolts with care his postern-gate,
And barricades his castle wall.

When others wait the rising sun,
He from his mouldering parapet
Still contemplates the valley dun,
Where he beheld the red sun set.

Securely doth the past enlock
His retrospective spirit lone.
The pendulum within his clock
Was broken centuries agone.

Waking the echoes wanders he
Beneath his feudal arches drear,
His ringing footsteps seemingly
Followed by other footsteps clear.

Nor priests nor friends with him make bold,
Nor burghers plain nor gentlemen;
But his ancestral portraits hold
A parley with him now and then.

And of a midnight, sparing him
The ennui of a lonely cup,
Bjorn, harbouring a gloomy whim,
Invites his ancestors to sup.

Forth stepping at the hour's grim stroke,
Come phantoms armed from foot to head.
Bjorn, quaking, to the solemn folk
Proffers with state the goblet red.

To seat itself each panoply
With joints that grumble in revolt
Maketh an angle with its knee,
That creaketh like a rusty bolt;

Till all at once the suit of mail,
Rude coffin of an absent bulk,
Cleaving the silence with a wail,
Falls in its chair, a clanking hulk.

Landgraves and burgraves, spare and stout,
Come down from heaven or up from hell,
The iron guests of many a bout,
Are bound within the midnight spell.

Their blow-indented helmets bear
Heraldic beasts that bay and grin,
Athwart the shades the red lights glare
On crest and ancient lambrequin.

Each empty, open casque now seems
Like to the helms of heraldries,
Save for two strange and livid gleams
That issue forth in threatening wise.

Seated is each old combatant
In the vast hall, at Bjorn's behest,
And the uncertain shadows grant
A swarthy page to every guest.

The liquors in the candle-shine
Take on suspicious purples. All
The viands in their gravy's wine
Grow lurid and fantastical.

Sometimes a breastplate glitters bright,
A morion speeds its flashes wroth,
A rondelle from a hand of might
Drops heavily upon the cloth.

Heard are the softly flapping wings
Of unseen bats. The shimmer flicks
Upon the carven panellings
The banners of the heretics.

The stiffly bended gauntlets play
In the dull glow incarnadine,
And, creaking, to the helmets gray
Pour bumpers full of Rhenish wine;

Or with their daggers keen of blade
Carve boars upon the plates of gold.
The corridor's uncanny shade
Hath clamours vague and manifold.

The orgy waxes riotsome —
One could not hear God's voice for it —
For when a phantom sups from home,
What wrong if he carouse a bit ?

Now every ghostly care they drown
With jokes and jeers and loud guffaws.
A wine-cascade is running down
Each rusty helmet's iron jaws.

The full and rounded hauberks bulge,
And to the neck the river mounts.
Their eyes with liquid fire effulge.
They 're howling drunk, these valiant counts!

One through the salad idly wields
A foot; another scolds the sick.
Some like the lions on their shields
With gaping mouths the fancy trick.

In voice still hoarse from silence long
In the tomb's dampness and restraint,
Max playfully intones a song
Of thirteen hundred, crude and quaint.

Albrecht, of quarrelsome repute,
Stirs right and left a war intense,
And drubs about with fist and foot,
As once he drubbed the Saracens.

And heated Fritz his helmet doffs,
Not deeming he 's a headless trunk.
Then down pell-mell mid roars and scoffs
Together roll the phantoms drunk.

Ah! 'T is a hideous battle-ground,
Where pots and weapons bang and scud,
Where every dead man through some wound
Doth vomit victuals up for blood.

And Bjorn observes them, sad of eye,
And haggard, while athwart the panes
The dawn comes creeping stealthily,
With blue, thin lights, and darkness wanes.

The prostrate mass of rusty brown
Pales like a torch in daylight's room,
Until the drunkest pours him down
At last the stirrup-cup of doom.

The cock crows loud. And with the day
Once more with haughty mien and bold,
Their revel-weary heads they lay
Upon their marble pillows cold.

THE WATCH

Now twice my watch have I taken,
And twice as I 've gazing sat,
The hand has pointed unshaken
To one — and it 's long past that!

The clock's light cadences linger.
The sun-dial laughs from the lawn,
And points with a long, gaunt finger
The path that its shade has drawn.

A steeple ironically
Calls the true time to me.
The belfry bell makes tally
And taunts me with accents free.

Ah, dead is the wretch! I sought not,
Last night, to my reverie sold,
Its ruby circle! I thought not
Of glimmering key of gold!

No longer I see with pleasure
The spring of the balance-wheel
Flit hither and there at measure,
Like a butterfly form of steel.

THE WATCH

When Hippogriff bears me, yearning,
Through skies of another sphere,
My soul-reft body goes turning
Wherever the steed may veer.

Eternity still is giving
Its gaze to the lifeless face.
Time seeketh the heart once living,
His ear at the old watch-case, —

That heart whose regular motion
Was followed within my breast
By wave-beats of life's full ocean!
Ah well! the watch is at rest.

But its brother is beating ever,
Steadfast and sturdy kept
By One Who forgetteth never, —
Who wound it the while I slept.

THE MERMAIDS

There's a sketch you may discover
By an artist of degree
Rime and metre quarrel over —
Théophile Kniatowski.

On the snowy foam that fringes
All the mantle of the brine,
Radiant with the sunlight's tinges,
Three mermaidens softly shine.

Like the drownèd lilies dancing
Turn they, as the spiral wave
Buoys their bodies hiding, glancing,
As they sink and rise and lave.

In their golden hair for dowers
They have twined with beauteous hands
Shells for diadems, and flowers
From the deep wild under sands.

Oysters pour a pearly hoarding
Their enrapturing throats to gem,
And the wave, its wealth according,
Tosses other pearls to them.

THE MERMAIDS

Borne above the crest of ocean
By a Triton hand and strong,
Twine they, beautiful of motion,
Under gleaming tresses long.

And the crystal water under,
Down the blue the glories pale
Of each lovely form of wonder,
Tapered to a shimmering tail.

Ah! But who the scaly swimmers
Would behold in modern day —
When a bust of ivory glimmers,
Cool from kisses of the spray?

Look! Oh, mingled truth and fable!
O'er the horizon steady plied,
Comes a vessel proud and stable,
Toward the mermaids terrified!

Tricoloured its flag is flaunted,
And it vomits vapour red,
And it beats the billows daunted,
Till the nymphs dive low for dread.

Fearlessly they did beleaguer
Triremes immemorial,
And the dolphins arched and eager
Waited for Arion's call.

This of old. But now the steamer —
Vulcan hurtling Venus' charms, —
Would destroy the siren gleamer,
With her fair, nude tail and arms.

Farewell myth! The boat that passes
Thinks to see on silver bar,
Where the widening billow glasses,
Porpoises that plunge afar.

TWO LOVE-LOCKS

Reviving languorous dreaming
Of conquered, conquering eye,
Upon thy forehead gleaming,
Two fairest love-locks lie.

I see them softly nesting,
Of wondrous, golden sheen,
Like little wheels come resting
From car of Mab the Queen;

Or bows of Cupid ready
To let the arrows fly,
Bent circlewise and steady
For archer's mastery.

One heart have I of passion.
Yet two love-locks are thine!
O brow of fickle fashion!
Whose heart is caught with mine?

THE TEA-ROSE

Most beautiful of all the roses
Is this half-open bud, whose bare,
Unpetalled heart a dream discloses
Of carmine very faint and fair.

I wonder, was it once a white rose,
Till butterfly too ardent spoke
A language soft, and in the light rose
A shyer, warmer tint awoke?

Its delicate fabric hath the colour
Of lovely and velutinous skin.
Its perfect freshness maketh duller
Environing hues incarnadine.

For as some rare patrician features
Eclipse the brows of ruddier gleam,
So masquerade as rustic creatures
Gay sisters of this rose supreme.

But, dear one, if your hand caress it,
And raise it for its sweet perfume,
Ere yet your velvet cheek shall press it,
'T will fade before a fairer bloom.

THE TEA-ROSE

No rose in all the world so tender,
That gloweth in the springtime fleet,
But shall its every charm surrender
Unto your seventeen years, my sweet.

A face hath more than petal's power:
A pure heart's blood that blushing flows
O'er youth's nobility, is flower
High sovereign over every rose.

CARMEN

Slender is Carmen, of lissome guise,
Her hair is black as the midnight's heart;
Dark circles are under her gypsy eyes,
Her swarthy skin is the devil's art.

The women will mock at her form and face;
But the men will follow her all the day.
Toledo's Archbishop (now save His Grace!)
Tones his mass at her knees, they say.

Nestled in warmth of her amber neck
Lies a massive coil, till she fling it down
To be a raiment to frame and deck
Her delicate body from foot to crown.

Then out from her pallid face with power
Her witching, terrible smiles compel.
Her mouth is a mystical poison-flower
That hath drawn its crimson from hearts in hell.

The haughtiest beauty must yield her fame,
When this strange vision shall dusk her sky.
For Carmen rules, and her glance's flame
Shall set the torch to satiety.

Wild, graceless Carmen! — Though yet this be,
Savour she hath of a world undreamt,
Of a world of wonder, whose salt young sea
Provoked a Venus to rise and tempt.

WHAT THE SWALLOWS SAY

AN AUTUMN SONG

The dry, brown leaves have dropped forlorn,
And lie amid the golden grass.
The wind is fresh both eve and morn.
But where are summer days, alas!

The tardy flowers the autumn stayed
For latter treasures now unfold.
The dahlia dons its gay cockade,
Its flaming cap the marigold.

Rain stirs the pool with pelt and shock.
The swallows to the roof repair,
Confabulating as they flock
And feel the winter in the air.

By hundreds gather they to vow
Their little yearnings and intents.
Saith one: "'T is fair in Athens now,
Upon the sun-warm battlements!

"Thither I go to take my nap
Upon the Parthenon high and free.
My cornice nest is in the gap
A cannon-ball made there for me."

And one: "A ceiling meets my needs
Within a Smyrna coffee-house,
Where Hadjis tell their amber beads
Upon the threshold luminous.

"I go and come above the folk,
While their chibouques their clouds upfling.
I skim along through silver smoke,
And graze the turbans with my wing."

Another: "There's a triglyph gray
On one of Baalbec's temples high.
'T is there I go to brood all day
Above my little family."

Another calleth, "My address
Is settled: 'At the Knights of Rhodes.'
In a dark colonnade's recess
I 'll make the snuggest of abodes."

"Old age hath made me slow for flight,"
Declares a fifth; "I 'll rest at even
On Malta's terraces of white,
Where blue sea melts to blue of heaven."

A sixth: "In Cairo is my home,
Up in a minaret's retreat:
A twig or two, a bit of loam —
My winter lodgings are complete."

A last: "The Second Cataract
Shall mark my place — the nest of brown
A granite king doth hold intact
Within the circle of his crown."

And all together sing: "What miles
To-morrow shall have stretched beneath
Our fleeing swarm: — remembered isles,
Snow peaks, vast waters, lands of heath!"

With calls and cries and beat of wings,
Grown eager now and venturesome,
The swallows hold their twitterings,
To see the blight of winter come.

And I — I understand them all,
Because the poet is a bird, —
Oh! but a sorry bird, and thrall
To a great lack, pressed heavenward.

It's Oh for wings! to seek the star,
To count the seas when day is done,
To breast the air with swallows far,
To verdant spring, to golden sun!

CHRISTMAS

Black is the sky and white the ground.
O ring, ye bells, your carol's grace!
The Child is born! A love profound
Beams o'er Him from His Mother's face.

No silken woof of costly show
Keeps off the bitter cold from Him.
But spider-webs have drooped them low,
To be His curtain soft and dim.

Now trembles on the straw downspread
The Little Child, the Star beneath.
To warm Him in His holy bed,
Upon Him ox and ass do breathe.

Snow hangs its fringes on the byre.
The roof stands open to the tryst
Of aureoled saints, that sweetly choir
To shepherds, "Come, behold the Christ!"

THE DEAD CHILD'S PLAY-THINGS

MARIE comes no more at call.
  She has wandered from her play.
Ah, how pitifully small
  Was the coffin borne away!

See — about the nursery floor
  All her little heritage:
Rubber ball and battledore,
  Tattered book and coloured page.

Poor forsaken doll! in vain
  Stretch your arms. She will not come.
Stopped forever is the train,
  And the music-box is dumb.

Some one touched it soft, apart,
  Where the silence is her name.
And what sinking of the heart
  At the plaintive note that came!

Ah, the anguish! when the tomb
  Robs the cradle; when bereft
We discover in the gloom
  Child toys that an angel left.

AFTER WRITING MY DRAMATIC REVIEW

My columns are ranged and steady,
  Upbearing, though sad forespent,
  The newspaper pediment,
And my review is ready.

Now for a week, poetaster,
  My door is bolted. Away,
  Thou still-born masterpiece, — aye,
Till Monday I am my master.

No melodrama shall whiten
  My labour with threadbare leaves.
  The warp that my fancy weaves
With silken flowers shall brighten.

Brief moment my spirit's warder,
  Ye voices of soul that float,
  I 'll hearken your sorrow's note,
Nor verses evoke to order.

Then deep in my glass regaining
The health of a day gone by, —
Old visions for company —
The bloom of my vintage draining,

The wine of my thought I 'll measure,
Wine virgin of alien glow,
Grapes trodden by life, that flow
From my heart at my heart's own pleasure!

THE CASTLE OF REMEMBRANCE

Before my hearth with head low-bowed
I dream, and strive to reach again,
Across the misty past's gray cloud,
Unto Remembrance's domain,

Where tree and house and upland way
Are blurred and blue like passing ghosts,
And the eye, ponder though it may,
Consults in vain the guiding-posts.

Now gropingly to gain a sight
Of all the buried world, I press
Through mystic marge of shade and light
And limbo of forgetfulness.

But white, diaphanous Memory stands,
Where many roadways meet and spread,
Like Ariadne, in my hands
Thrusting her little ball of thread.

Henceforth the way is all secure.
The shrouded sun hath reappeared,
And o'er the trees with vision sure
I see the castle tower upreared.

Beneath the boughs where day grows dark
With shower on shower of leaves down-poured
The dear old path through moss and bark
Still lengthens far its narrow cord.

But creeping-plant and bramble-spray
Have wrought a net to daunt me now.
The stubborn branch I force away
Swings fiercely back to lash my brow.

I come upon the house at last.
No window lit with lamp or face,
No breath of smoke from gables vast,
To touch with life the mouldering place!

Bridges are crumbling. Moats are still,
And slimed with rank, green refuse-flowers,
And tortuous waves of ivy fill
The crevices and choke the towers.

The portico in moonlight wanes.
Time sculptures it to suit his whim.
And with the wash of many rains
My coloured coat of arms is dim.

The door I open eagerly.
The ancient hinges creak and halt.
A breath of dampness wafts to me
The musty odour of the vault.

The hairy nettle sharp of sting,
The coarse and broad-leafed burdock weed
In court-yard nooks are prospering,
By spreading hemlocks canopied.

Upon two marble monsters near,
That guard the mossy steps of stone,
The shadow of a tree falls clear,
That in my absence has upgrown.

Sudden the lion sentinels raise
Their paws, aggressive and malign,
And challenge me with their white gaze;
But soft I breathe the countersign.

I pass. The old dog menaceth,
But falls back hushed, the shades amid.
My resonant footstep wakeneth
Crouched echoes in their corners hid.

Through yellow panes of glass a ray
Of dubious light creeps down the hall
Where ancient tapestries display
Apollo's fortunes from the wall.

Fair tree-bound Daphne still with grace
Stretches her tufted fingers green.
But in the amorous god's embrace
She fades, a formless phantom seen.

I watch divine Apollo stand,
Herdsman to acarus-riddled sheep,
The Muses Nine, a haggard band,
Upon a faded Pindus weep;

While Solitude in scanty gown
Traces " Desertion " in the dust
That through the air she sifteth down
Upon a marble stand august.

And now, among forgotten things,
I find, like sleepers manifold,
Pastels bedimmed, dark picturings,
Young beauties, and the friends of old.

My faltering fingers lift a crape, —
And lo, my love with look and lure!
With puffing skirts and prisoned shape!
Cidalise *à la* Pompadour!

A tender, blossoming rose she feels
Against her ribboned bodice pressed,
Whose lace half hides and half reveals
A snowy, azure-veinèd breast.

Within her eyes gleam sparkles lush,
As on the rime-kissed, deadened leaves.
Upon her cheek a purple flush —
Death's own cosmetic hue! — deceives.

She startles as I come before,
And fixeth soft on me her eyes,
Reproachfully forevermore,
Yet with a charm and witching wise.

Life bore me from thee at its will,
Yet on my heart thy name is laid,
Thou dead delight, that lingereth still,
Bedizened for the masquerade!

Envious of Art, fair Nature wrought
To overpass Murillo's fame, —
From Andalusia here she brought
The face that lights the second frame.

By some poetical caprice,
Our atmosphere of mist and cloud,
With rare exotic charm's increase
This other Petra Camara dowed.

Warm orange tones are gilding yet
Her lovely skin of roseate hue.
Her eyelids fair have lashes jet
That beams of sunshine filter through.

There shimmers fine a pearly gleam
Between her scarlet lips elate;
Her beauty flashes forth supreme —
A bright south summer pomegranate.

Long to the sound of Spain's guitar,
I told her praise 'mid song and glass.
She came alone one evenstar,
And all my room Alhambra was.

Farther I see a robust Fair,
With strong and gem-beladen arms.
In pearls of price and velvet rare
Are set her ivory bosom's charms.

Her ennui is a weary queen's,
An adulating court amid.
Superb, aloof, her hand she leans
Upon a casket's jewelled lid.

Her sensuous lips their crimes confess,
As crimson with the blood of hearts.
With brutal, mad voluptuousness
Her conquering eye a challenge darts.

Here dwells, in lieu of tender grace,
Vertiginous allure, whereof
A cruel Venus ruled a race,
Presiding o'er malignant love.

Unnatural mother to her child,
This Venus all imperative!
O thou, my bitter joy and wild, —
Farewell forever! I forgive!

Within its frame in shadow fine,
The misty glass that still endures
Reveals another face than mine, —
The earliest of my portraitures.

A retrospective ghost, with face
Of vanished type, steps from the vast
Dim mirror of his biding-place
In tenebrous, forgotten past.

Gay in his doublet satin-rose,
Coloured in bold and vivid way,
He seems as if about to pose
For Deveria or Boulanger.

Terror of glabrous commoner,
His flowing locks in royal guise,
Like mane of lion, or sinister
King's hair, fall heavy to his thighs.

Romanticist of bold conceit,
Knight of an art which strives anew,
He hurled himself at Drama's feet,
When erst Hernani's trumpet blew.

Night falls. The corners are astir
With many shapes and shadows tall.
The Unknown — grim stage-carpenter —
Sets up its darksome frights o'er all.

A sudden burst of candles, weird
With aureoles, like lamps of death!
The room is populous, and bleared
With folk brought hither by a breath!

Down step the portraits from the wall, —
A ruddy-litten company!
Circling the fireplace in the hall,
Where the wood blazes suddenly.

The figures wrested from the tombs
Have lost their rigid, frozen mien,
The gradual glow of life illumes
The Past with flush incarnadine.

A colour lights the faces pale,
As in the days of old delight.
Friends whom my thought shall never fail,
I thank ye, that ye came to-night!

Now eighteen-thirty shows to me
Its great and valiant-hearted men.
(Ah, like Otranto's pirates, we
Who were an hundred, are but ten!)

And one his reddish beard spreads out,
Like Barbarossa in his cave.
Another his mustachio stout
Curls at the ends in fashion suave.

Under the ample fold that cloaks
An ever unrevealèd ill,
Petrus a cigarette now smokes,
Naming it "papelito" still.

Another cometh, fain to tell
His visions and his hopes supreme.
Like Icarus on the sands he fell,
Where lie all broken shafts of dream.

And one a drama hath begot,
Planned after some new model's freak,
Which, merging all things in its plot,
Makes Calderon with Molière speak.

Tom, late forsaken by his Dear,
Love's Labour 's Lost must low recite;
And Fritz to Cidalise makes clear
Faust's vision of Walpurgis Night.

But dawn comes through the window free.
Diaphanous the phantoms grow.
The objects of reality
Strike through their shapes that merge and go.

The candles are consumed away.
The ember-lights no longer gleam
Upon the hearth. No thing shall stay.
Farewell, O castle of my dream!

December gray shall turn once more
The glass of Time, for all we fret!
The present enters at my door,
And vainly bids me to forget.

CAMELLIA AND MEADOW-DAISY

We praise the hot-house flowers that loom
Far from their native sun and shade,
The flaring forms that flaunt their bloom,
Like jewels under glass displayed.

With never breeze to kiss their heads,
They have their birth and live and die
On costly, artificial beds,
Beneath an ever-crystal sky.

For whomsoever idly scans,
Baring their treasures to entice,
Like fair and sumptuous courtesans,
They stand for sale at golden price.

Fine porcelain holds their gathered groups,
Or glove-clad fingers fondle them
Between the dances, till each droops
Upon a limp or broken stem.

But down amid the grass unreaped,
Shunning the curious, in repose
And silence all the long day steeped,
A little woodland daisy blows.

A butterfly upon the wing
To point the place, a casual look,
And you surprise the sweet, shy thing,
Within its calm, sequestered nook.

Beneath the blue it openeth,
Rising on slender, vernal rod,
Spreading its soul in fragrant breath
For solitude and for its God.

And proud camellias tall and white,
Red tulips in a flaming mass,
Are all at once forgotten quite,
For the small flower amid the grass.

THE FELLAH

On seeing a Water-Colour by Princess Mathilde

Caprice of brush fantastical,
And of imperial idleness,
Your fellah-sphinx presents us all
With an enigma worth the guess.

A rigid fashion, verily,
This mask, this garment, seem to us,
Intriguing with its mystery
The ball-room's every Œdipus.

Isis bequeathed her veil of old
To modern daughters of the Nile.
But through this band austere, behold,
Two stars of radiance beam and smile, —

Two stars, two eyes, two poems that spring,
The soft, voluptuous fires whereof
Resolve the riddle, murmuring:
"Lo, I am Beauty! Be thou Love!"

THE GARRET

From balcony tiles where casual cats
Sit low in wait for birds unwise,
I see the worn and riven slats
Of a poor, humble garret rise.

Now could I as an author lie,
To give you comfort as you think,
Its window I would falsify,
And frame with flowers refined and pink,

And place within it Rigolette
With her cheap looking-glass, somehow,
Whose broken glazing mirrors yet
A portion of her pretty brow;

Or Margery, her dress undone,
Her hair blown free, her tie forgot,
Watering in the pleasant sun
Her pail-encompassed garden-plot;

Or poet-youth whom fame awaits,
Who scans his verse and eyes the hills,
Or in a reverie contemplates
Montmartre with its distant mills.

Alas! my garret is no feint.
There climbeth no convolvulus.
The window with its nibbled paint
Leers filmy and unluminous.

Alike for artist and grisette,
Alike for widower and lad,
A garret — save to music set —
Is never otherwise than sad.

Of old, beneath an angle pent,
That forced the forehead to a kiss,
Love, with a folding-couch content,
To chat with Susan deemed it bliss.

But we must wad our bliss about
With cushioned walls and laces wide,
And silks that flutter in and out,
O'er beds by Monbro canopied.

This evening, to Mount Breda fled
Is Rigolette, to linger there,
And Margery, well clothed and fed,
No longer tends her garden fair.

THE GARRET

The poet, tired of catching rimes
  Upon the wing, has turned to cull
Reporter's bays, and left betimes
  A heaven for an entresol.

And in the window this is all:
  An ancient goody chattering,
And railing at a kitten small
  That toys forever with a string.

THE CLOUD

Lightly in the azure air
  Soars a cloud, emerging free
Like a virgin from the fair
    Blue sea;

Or an Aphrodite sweet,
  Floating upright and empearled
In the shell, about its feet
    Foam-curled.

Undulating overhead,
  How its changing body glows!
On its shoulder dawn hath spread
    A rose.

Marble, snow, blend amorously
  In that form by sunlight kissed —
Slumbering Antiope
    Of mist!

Sailing unto distant goal,
  Over Alps and Apennines,
Sister of the woman-soul,
    It shines;

Till my heart flies forth at last
On the wings of passion warm,
And I yearn to gather fast
Its form.

Reason saith: "Mere vapour thing!
Bursting bubble! Yet, we deem,
Holds this wind-distorted ring
Our dream."

Faith declareth: "Beauty seen,
Like a cloud, is but a thought,
Or a breath, that, having been,
Is naught.

"Have thy vision. Build it proud.
Let thy soul be full thereof.
Love a woman — love a cloud —
But love!"

THE BLACKBIRD

A BIRD from yonder branch at dawn
Is trilling forth a joyful note,
Or hopping o'er the frozen lawn,
In yellow boots and ebon coat.

It is the blackbird credulous.
Little of calendar knows he,
Whose soul, with sunbeams luminous,
Sings April to the snows that be.

Rain sweeps in torrents unrepressed.
The Arve makes dull the Rhone with mire.
The pleasant hall retains its guest
In goodly cheer before the fire.

The mountains have their ermine on,
Each one a mighty magistrate,
And hold grave conference upon
A case of Winter lasting late.

The bird dries well his wing, and long,
Despite the rains, the mists that roll,
Insists upon his little song,
Believes in Spring with all his soul.

THE BLACKBIRD

He softly chides the slumberous morn
For dallying so long abed,
And bids the shivering flower forlorn
Be bold, and raise aloft its head;

Behind the dark sees day that smiles,
Even as behind the Holy Rod,
When bare the altar, dim the aisles,
The child of faith beholds his God.

He trusts to Nature's purpose high,
Sure of her laws for here and now.
Who laughs at thy philosophy,
Dear blackbird, is less wise than thou!

THE FLOWER THAT MAKES THE SPRINGTIME

The chestnut trees are soon to flower
  At fair *Saint Jean*, the villa dipped
In sun, before whose viny tower
  Stretch purple mountains silver-tipped.

The little leaves that yesterday
  Pressed in their bodices were seen
Have put their sober garb away,
  And touched the tender twigs with green.

But vainly do the sunbeams fill
  The branches with a flood of light.
The shy bud hesitateth still
  To show the secret thyrse of white.

And yet the rosy peach-tree blooms,
  Like some faint blush of first desire.
The apple waves a wealth of plumes,
  And laughs in all its fresh attire.

To bask amid the buttercups
The timid speedwell ventures out.
Nature calls every earthling up,
And reassures each tiny sprout.

Yet I must off to other sphere!
Then please your poet, chestnuts tall,
Yea, spread ye forth without a fear
Your firework bloom fantastical!

I know your summer splendour's pride.
I've seen you standing sumptuous
In autumn's tunics purple-dyed,
With golden circlets luminous.

In winter white and crystal-crossed
Your delicate boughs I saw again,—
Like lovely traceries the frost
Limns lightly on the window-pane.

Your every garment I have known,
Ye chestnuts grand that loom aloft,—
Save one to me you've never shown,
Of young green fabric first and soft.

Ah, well, good-bye, for I must go!
Keep, then, your flowers, where'er they be.
There is another flower I know,
That makes the springtime fair for me.

Let May with all her blooms arise,
Let May with all her blooms depart!
That flower sufficeth for mine eyes,
And hath pure honey in its heart.

Let be the season where it waits,
And blue or dull be heaven's dome —
It smiles and charms and captivates, —
The precious violet of my home!

A LAST WISH

How long my soul has loved thee, love!
It is full many a year agone.
Thy spring — what charm of flowers thereof,
My winter — what wild snows thereon!

White lilacs from the land of graves
Blow near my temples. Soon enow
Thou 'lt mark the pallid mass that waves
Enshadowing my withered brow.

My westering sun must speedy drop,
And disappear behind the road.
Already on the dim hill-top,
There gleams and waits my last abode.

Then from thy rosy lips let fall
Upon my lips a tardy kiss,
That in my tomb, when comes the call,
My heart may rest, remembering this.

THE DOVE

O TENDER, beauteous dove,
Calling such plaintive things!
Wilt serve unto my love,
And be my love's own wings?

O, but we're like, poor heart!
Thy dear one, too, is far.
Remembering, apart,
Each weeps beneath the star.

Let not thy rosy feet
Stay once on any tower, —
I am so fain, my sweet, —
So weary turns the hour!

Forswear the palm's repose
That spreadeth over all,
And gables where the snows
Of other pinions fall.

Now fail me not, nor fear!
He dwelleth near the king.
Give him this letter, dear,
These kisses on thy wing.

Then seek again my breast,
This flaming, throbbing goal,
Then come, my dove, and rest —
But bring me back his soul!

A PLEASANT EVENING

What flurrying of rains and snows!
Now every coachman, blue of nose,
In fur and ire
Sits petrified. Oh, it were right
To spend this wild December night
Before one's fire!

The cosy chimney-corner chair
Assumes its most persuasive air.
I seem to see
Its arms held out, its voice to hear,
Beseeching like a mistress dear:
"Ah, stay with me!"

A gauze reveals the orbèd lamp,
Like a fair breast beneath a guimpe,
And drowsily
The shimmer of its light ascends,
Flushing with gold and crimson blends
The ceiling high.

The silence frames no sound of things,
Save for the pendulum that swings
Its golden disk,
And many winds that roam and weep,
Or stealthy to the hall-way sweep,
To dance and frisk.

It 's ball-night at the Embassy.
My coat's limp sleeves are signalling me
To dress anon.
My waistcoat yawns. My shirt obtuse
Seems raising high its wristbands loose,
To be put on.

A narrow boot's abundant glaze
Reflects the ruddy firelight's blaze.
Have I forgot ?
A glove's flat fingers span the shelf.
A thin cravat protrudes itself,
And begs a knot.

Then must I forth ? But what a bore —
To seek the over-crowded door !
To fall in line

Of coaches bearing coats of arms
And haughty beauties with their charms,
Superb and fine!

To stand against a portal wide
And see the surging mass inside
Bear form on form:
Old faces, faces fresh and young,
Black coats low bodices among, —
A motley swarm!

And puffy backs that hide their red
With laces fine of costly thread
Aerial,
Dandies, diplomatists, that press,
With features dull, expressionless,
At fashion's call.

What! Brave, to win a glance of hers,
The rows of lynx-eyed dowagers!
Try undeterred
To speak the dear name of my dear,
And whisper softly in her ear
Love's little word!

Nay, but I 'll not ! Her eye shall heed
A letter in the flowers I 'll speed.
No ball-room now !
Let Parma violets make good
Whatever be her passing mood.
They hold my vow.

Ensconced with Heine or with Taine,
Or, if I like, the Goncourts twain,
The time will go.
I 'll dream, until the hour shall stir
Reality, and wait for her.
She 'll come, I know.

ART

More fair the work, more strong,
Stamped in resistance long, —
Enamel, marble, song.

Poet, no shackles bear,
Yet bid thy Muse to wear
The buskin bound with care.

A fashion loose forsake, —
A shoe of sloven make,
That any foot may take.

Sculptor, the clay withstand,
That yieldeth to the hand,
Though listless heart command.

Contend till thou have wrought,
Till the hard stone have caught
The beauty of thy thought.

With Paros match thy might,
And with Carrara bright,
That guard the line of light.

Borrow from Syracuse
The bronze's stubborn use,
Wherein thy form to choose.

And with a delicate grace
In the veined onyx trace
Apollo's perfect face.

Painter, put thou aside
The transient. Be thy pride
The colour furnace-tried.

Limn thou, fantastic, free
Blue sirens of the sea,
And beasts of heraldry.

Before a nimbus gold
Transcendently uphold
The Child, the Cross foretold.

Things perish. Gods have passed.
But song sublimely cast
Shall citadels outlast.

And the forgotten seal
Turned by the plowman's steel
An emperor may reveal.

For Art alone is great:
The bust survives the state,
The crown the potentate.

Carve, burnish, build thy theme, —
But fix thy wavering dream
In the stern rock supreme.

Selected Poems

SELECTED POEMS

THE MIDDLE AGES

WHENEVER I follow my fancy away,
I love near the old Gothic castles to stray,
Where tower the roofs azure-slated and high
And crowned with low shrubs, green against the pale sky.
I love the dear gables, the walls turreted,
The window-panes crossed with their networks of lead, —
The legended olden-time valiant and saint
Under ogival arch wrought with fantasy quaint,
The chapel with pinnacle piercing the air,
Whose bell rings the summons to worship and prayer.
I love the mossed stone where the rain-water files,
The courts where the grasses peep up mid the tiles,
The keep to whose summit the weather-vane clings,
Grazed oft by the stately ciconia's white wings,
The trembling drawbridges of gates blazoned bold
With fabulous monsters and griffins of gold,

The stairways colossal, the halls dim and vast,
The corridors endless that gather the past,
Where faint as faint voices winds whisper and weep,
Where I wander at will, sunk in reveries deep,
And through hours of enchantment and mystery move,—
In the bright Middle Ages of knighthood and love!

THE CAPTIVE BIRD

Long time a prisoner, thou little bird,
These many days naught hast thou seen or heard,
Save inexhaustible, eternal rain, —
Gray threads against a grayer sky's domain, —
And cloud-bathed roofs. Amid the roar and chase
Of Winter dragging Storm about through space,
I know, dear heart, thou darest not to sing.
But let the bright sun of the lovely spring
Touch with its glance the blue-enamelled dome,
Over the silver seas bring swallows home,
Cast o'er the woods its trailing garments long,
And, little bird, thou shalt regain thy song.
But if, to memory bound, thou still regret,
Being unable ever to forget
The hill, the thicket, and the high elm-top,
The country golden with its golden crop,
The brimming river-sweep that wideneth,
Rippled by passing zephyrs sweet of breath,
I shall delight in all thy joys elate.
For linked we are together in one fate.

My soul, like thine, is caged with sufferings,
Against the mortal bars it beats its wings,
And fain would pierce the heaven's azure spell,
Itself an angel, track Ithuriel,
Inebriate with love and light and force,
And so ascend unto the Primal Source.
But ah, what hand shall break the barriers dun,
Or open up the pathway to the sun!

ON A THOUGHT OF WORDSWORTH'S

I 've read no line of Wordsworth whom the steven
  Of Byron hath assailed with bitterest gall,
  Save this I came upon, a fragment small
In a romance pseudonymously given,
From Apuleius filched, "Louisa," — leaven
  Of thought impure and pictures passional.
  How well the flash of beauty I recall,
The "*Spires whose silent finger points to heaven!*"

A white dove's feather down the darkness strayed,
  A lovely flower abloom in some foul nook.
    And now when riming halts and fancy tires,
And Prospero is of Ariel unobeyed,
  I over all the margin of my book
    Trace group on group of heavenward-pointing
      spires.

CARYATIDES

I LOOKED on Michael Angelo's wrought folk,
Sistine's great frescoes, the Last Judgment saw,—
Speechless, the while the wonder in me woke.
And as I looked my spirit bowed with awe.

A mass of shapes of every attitude,
Lion-like faces, necks of oxen strength,
Flesh firm as marble, muscles taut and rude,
With force to break a cable's iron length!

No stony arch upon their forms was set;
But all their sinews to some task were steeled.
Meseemed their tensioned arms were dripping sweat.
What, then, the invisible load their power revealed?

They bore a weight to weary Hercules,
The weight, O master, of thy mighty thought!
And never noble Caryatides
Their shoulders to more massive burden brought!

THE CHIMERA

A YOUNG chimera at my goblet's brim
Gave sweetest kiss amid the orgy's spell.
Emerald her eyes, and to her haunches slim
The golden torrent of her tresses fell.

Her shoulders fluttering pinions did bedeck.
I sprang upon her back, for travel fain,
And toward me bending firm her lovely neck,
I plunged my tightening fingers in her mane.

She struggled madly; but I clung, austere,
With iron knees I crushed her flanks to me.
Then softly came her voice, and silver-clear:
"Whither, then, master, shall I carry thee?"

To farthest edge of all eternal things,
Beyond the sun, beyond the bounds of space.
But weary ere the end shall be thy wings, —
For I would see my vision face to face!

THE ENCOUNTER

Yester morning it was I beheld as I dreamed
On the arch of a bridge an encounter of horse.
Cuirassed and caparisoned, truly it seemed
The charging of splendid and passionate force.

Fierce dragons crouched low on the helmets of light,
And haggard-eyed, brazen Medusas peered out
From the bucklers. The imbricate brassarts were bright
With knotted wild serpents which girt them about.

Oft from the gigantical arch's tall brim
A knight, losing balance, a mad frighted steed,
Reeled down to the depth of the water whose grim,
Cruel jaws waited wide in their crocodile greed.

It was you, O my thoughts, my desires! battling well —
Hard-pressing, down-beating, the bridgeway to keep.
And your mutilate bodies that hurtled and fell,
Engulfed in the wave, are forever asleep.

VERSAILLES

To be a city's ghost, Versailles, thy fate!
Like Venus in her Adriatic, how
Thy paralytic form doth trembling bow
Under a carven mantle's sumptuous weight!
Ah, what impoverishment, what fallen state, —
Olden, yet not antique! No vine hast thou,
About thy portico upspringing now
To veil thy nudeness wan and unelate.

And like a sorrowful, forsaken one,
Thou waitest for thy royal paramour,
Dreaming his bright return the livelong hours.
Beneath his tomb the Rival of the Sun
Now slumbers. Mute thy garden streams endure,
And but a statue people fills thy bowers.

BARCAROLLE

Tell me, beautiful maiden,
Whither wouldst thou away,
To what shore blossom-laden,
Through the wind and the spray?

Oars of ivory are gleaming,
Silken banners are streaming,
Golden-bright is the prow.
I 've a page fair and minion,
For a sail a saint's pinion,
And for ballast a bough.

Tell me, beautiful maiden,
Whither wouldst thou away,
To what shore blossom-laden,
Through the wind and the spray?

Tell me, what is thy pleasure,
A wide ocean to measure?
A far island to claim?
Wreaths of snow-flowers to fashion,
Or to linger with passion
Near the flower of the flame?

BARCAROLLE

Tell me, beautiful maiden,
Whither wouldst thou away,
To what shore blossom-laden,
Through the wind and the spray?

"To the land ever vernal,
Where love liveth eternal,
Ah, take me!" she sighs.
Sweet, this land of thy seeing
Hath no place and no being,
Under any love skies!

THE PORTAL

O ARTIST, man, whoever thou mayst be,
Marvel not through so sad a gate to see
This new-born volume fatally unfold!

Alas! all monument built high, complete,
Before it raise its head must plunge its feet:
The skyward tower hath felt the secret mould.

Below, the night-bird and the tomb. Above,
Rose of the sun and whiteness of the dove,
Carols and bells on every arch of gold.

Above, the minarets, the window's charm,
Where birdlings fret their wings in sunbeams warm —
The carved escutcheons borne by angels tall,

Acanthus leaves and lotus flowers of stone,
Like lilies in Elysian gardens blown.
Below, rude shaft and vault elliptical,

Knights rigid on their biers the deathlong days,
With folded hands and helpless upward gaze,
And oozing drips from cavern roofs that fall.

THE PORTAL

My book is builded thus, with narrow line
Of stratum stone, embossed with many a sign,
And carven words the creeping mosses fill.

God grant that, passing o'er this humble place,
The pilgrim foot shall never quite efface
Its poor inscription and its work's unskill.

My ghostly dead! That ye might walk the shades,
With patience have I wrought your colonnades,
And in my Campo-Santo couched you still.

There watcheth at your side an angel true,
To make a curtain of his wing for you,
Pillow of marble, cloth of leaden fold.

Yea, Righteousness and Peace have kissed in stone,
Mercy and Truth are met together, one
In flowing raiment, fair and aureoled.

A sculptured greyhound lieth at your heels.
A beauteous child eternally appeals
From out the shadow of the tomb enscrolled.

Upon the pillars arabesques arise
Of blooming vines that flutter circlewise,
As o'er espalier twines the dappled green.

And the dark tomb appears a gladsome thing,
With all this bright, perpetual flowering,
And looks on sorrow with a smile serene.

Death plays coquette. Only her forehead fair
Hath pallor still beneath her ebon hair.
She seeks to charm, and hath a royal mien.

A burst of colour fires the blazons clear;
The alabaster melts to whitest tear;
Less hard uplooms the bronze-built sepulture.

The consorts lie upon their beds of state;
Their pillows seem to soften with their weight,
Their love to flower within the marble pure;

Till with her garlands, traceries, and festoons,
Trefoils, pendentives, pillars wrought with runes,
Fantasia at her will may laugh and lure.

The tomb becomes a thing of bright parade,
A throne, a holy altar, an estrade,
For it is wish fulfilled of sight at last.

But if, by some capricious thought impelled,
Your hand should peradventure wonder-spelled
Upraise a cover rich with carven cast,

Under the heavy vault and architrave,
You still would find within the mouldering grave,
The stiff and white cadaver sheeted fast,

With never glimmer of a ray without,
Nor inner light to flood the bier about,
As in the pictures of the Holy Tomb.

Between her thin arms, like a tender spouse
Death binds her chosen to her, nor shall rouse
Them ever, nor let go her grasp of doom.

Scarce at the Judgment Hour their heads shall stir,
When at the trumpet blast the stars shall err,
And a strange wind blow out the torch's plume.

An angel shall discern them in his quest,
Upon the ruins of the world at rest,
For they shall sleep and sleep, the cycles long.

And if the Christ Himself should raise His hand,
As unto Lazarus, to bid them stand,
The grave would loosen not its fetter strong.

A tomb enwrought with sculpture is my verse,
That hides a body under leaf and thyrse,
And breaks its weeping heart to seem a song.

My poems are graves of mine illusions dead,
Where many a wild and luckless form I bed
When a ship founders in the tempest's peal! —

Abortive dream, ambition's eagerness,
All secret ardours, passions issueless, —
All bitter, intimate things that life can feel.

Each day the sea devours a goodly ship.
Close to the shore there hides a reef to rip
Her copper-sheathèd flanks and iron keel.

THE PORTAL

How many have I launched, with what fair names!
With silken streamers coloured like the flames, —
Never to cleave the harbour sun's reflex!

Ah, what dear passengers, what faces sweet, —
Desires with heaving breasts, hopes, visions fleet, —
O my heart's children swarming to the decks!

The sea hath shrouded them with glaucous taint:
The red of rose, the alabaster faint,
The star, the flower, lie floating in the wrecks.

Fearful and masterful, the hurtling tide
Dashes from drifting spar to dolphin side
My stark and drownèd dreams that sink and part.

For these inglorious travellers distant-bound,
Pale seekers of Americas unfound,
Curve into hollow caverns, O mine Art!

Then rise in towers and cupolas of fire,
Press upward in a bold cathedral spire,
And fix your peak in heaven's open heart!

Ye little birds of love and fantasy,
Sonnets, white doves of heaven's poetry,
  Light softly on my gables argentine.

And swallows, April messengers that pass,
Beat not your tender wings against the glass, —
  My marbles have their rifts where you may win.

My virgin saint shall hide you in her robe,
For you the emperor shall let fall his globe,
  The lotus heart spread wide to nest you in.

I've reared mine azure arch, mine organ grand,
I've carved my pillars, placed with loving hand
  In each recess a saint of martydom;

I've begged a chalice of Elygius, — spice
And frankincense for holy sacrifice
  Of Kaspar, and have drawn the sweet therefrom.

The people kneel at prayer. The radiant priest
In orphreyed chasuble prepares the Feast.
  The church is builded, Lord! Then wilt Thou come?

THE ESCORIAL

Set in defiance by a mountain crest,
There rises far across the country's breast
  The great Escorial towered and tenebrous,
Upon its shoulder bearing in the gloam,
Like a huge elephant, a massive dome,
  The granite whim of Spain's Tiberius.

Never did Pharaoh where the sad cliffs loom
Make for his mummy any darker tomb;
  Never had Sphinx more dulness in the vast,
Long desert where no thing of life resorts.
The mould o'ercovers the forsaken courts.
  Priests, friars, and flatterers have wrought and passed.

And all were dead, if from the hands of kings
Ensculptured, and from nooks and panellings
  There fluttered not a swarm of swallows free,
Playfully winging in a wild carouse,
To flick and tease and waken from its drowse
  The giant form that dreams eternity.

A KING'S SOLITUDE

Encloistered I live in a tenebrous place
At the depth of my soul, with no love and no friend,
Alone like a god, with no equal to face,
Save mine ancestors sleeping their sleep without end.
For grandeur is solitude! All the long day
A changeless, an indolent idol I stand;
Superhuman and cold in my castle I stay,
The purple upon me, the world in my hand.

Crown of thorns like to Christ's they have set on my hair.
Under weight of my terrible splendour I bow,
And the sharp, golden rays of the nimbus I wear;
Bright drops of blood-royal I bear on my brow.
Heraldical vultures come tearing my side.
Prometheus chained to his mountain and cast
To the tempest of heaven, the wrath of the tide,
Was only a king to his glory made fast.

Throned high on my mystic Olympus, I note
But the voices of flatterers flocking in line, —
Sole cadences counted as worthy to float
Unto summit so lofty, so distant, as mine.

A KING'S SOLITUDE

If wild with oppression my people upswarm,
And rattle their irons and moan in their fear, —
"Sleep, Sire," they tell me, "it is but the storm.
The thunder shall slacken, the sky shall be clear."

I've power for all things, and pleasure for none.
Ah, would I might know one deep wish in my heart,
Feel life in its warmth flood my bosom of stone,
Share one true delight, in one feast have a part!
But lonely the sun in its circle must go.
High peaks are the coldest, and never a spring,
And never a summer can soften the snow
On height of Sierra, in heart of a king!

THE LAUREL IN THE GENERALIFE GARDEN

In the Generalife a lovely laurel,
Gay as victory and glad as love,
Bathes its boughs in fountain mists auroral,
Hides a pearl within each bloom of coral.
And the green earth smiles to heaven above.

Like a blushing girl elate and slender,
Tint of flesh it taketh with the spring;
Like an odalisk in her nude splendour,
Waiting by the water, flushed and tender,
Ready for her fair apparelling.

Beauteous laurel! Many a mystic hour
Have I rested me beside its form,
Sealed my lips upon its precious flower —
Sweet red mouth! — and, thrilling to its power,
Felt it give me back my kisses warm.

FAREWELL TO POETRY

Come, fallen angel, fold thy wings of rose,
Doff thy white garment and thy golden ray!
Piercing the ambient ether of thy way,
A star, thou couldst but hurtling fall to prose.
Upon the ground thy dove-like feet unclose —
Walk — for thy soaring-time is not to-day.
Within thy bosom bid thy treasure stay,
And let thy lyre a moment now repose.

O thou poor child of heaven, thy song was vain!
Earth's ears were deaf to thy most subtle chord,
Nor could it guess the language of thy spell.
But ere thou leave me, O fair angel mine,
Go seek me out my pale sweet love adored,
And on her lips imprint a long farewell!

THE TULIP

I AM the tulip, Holland's choicest flower.
The thrifty Fleming — such my loveliness —
Pays for my perfect bulb a price no less
Than diamond. Lordly lineage is my dower.
Like to a proud Yolande in her young hour
Of pomp and kirtle bright, upon my dress
Of dewy crimson crossed with silver fess,
I bear the painted blazon of my power.

The gardener divine with fingers deft
Spun golden beams of iridescent noon,
And liquid depths of purple fashioned up,
To make for me a robe of royal weft.
Peerless I stand — yet grieve that Nature boon
Poured never perfume in my shining cup!

TOUCH NOT THE MARBLE

YEA, one may love a statue, so it be
Some subtle dream of Phidias. Tall and still,
From her bright self to man there may distil
An intimacy — for he comes, and she,
The goddess waits his coming secretly.
And he forgetteth that her form is chill,
That her white glances fascinate and kill,
Bound fast before her fair divinity.

She seems to smile, and he, grown bolder, cries:
"Immortal one, a woman, then, art thou?"
A fiery touch is on the marble wan;
Straightway it trembles; thunder shakes the skies, —
Well knoweth all-indulgent Venus how
A god's desire may flame the heart of man!

ALBERTUS

or THE SOUL AND SIN

A Theological Legend

THE COMEDY OF DEATH

Translated into English Prose
By F. C. DE SUMICHRAST

Albertus, or The Soul and Sin

A Theological Legend

ALBERTUS

or THE SOUL AND SIN

A Theological Legend

POEM

You shall see anon; 't is a knavish piece of work.

Hamlet, iii, 2.

I

By the side of a deep canal whose greenish, silent tide with water-lilies and boats is covered, rises, with pointed gables, granaries vast, slate-roofed towers on which storks their nests do build, and noisy pot-houses with topers filled, an old Flemish town such as Teniers loves to paint. Surely the place you know? — Look, there stands the willow, its dull green leaves on its shoulders spreading, as spreads the hair of a girl as she bathes; there the church and its steeple too; the pond, where bravely duck armadas do disport. In truth, all the picture lacks is a frame and nail wherefrom to hang it on the wall.

II

Comfort and far niente! A world of poetic calm and satisfaction that wellnigh might the fancy excite thither to go and Flemish turn; to own a well-coloured pipe, and a stoup with painted flowers adorned, a tankard huge enough four pints to hold, such as Brawer's topers grasp. And at night, close by the stove with hissing, crackling logs, amid a cloud of tobacco smoke, hands on stomach folded, vague thoughts idly to pursue, to doze or digest, to sing some old refrain, to drink a health, within one of those warm interiors which Ostade knows so well how to light up with soft luminousness.

III

So that even you, poet and painter, would come to forget that fairy land of which Goethe's Mignon, of cold abhorrent, remembering, oft to her Wilhelm speaks, — the land of sunshine where the citron ripens, where the jessamine ever freshly blows; to make you forget Naples for Amsterdam's sake, Claude Lorrain for Berghem; to make you willing to exchange, for these mossy-green walls between which Rembrandt,

within the dun darkness, brings gleaming forth Faust in dress of olden days, the fair marble palaces with their white colonnades, the dark-hued women, the langourous serenades, and all the azure Venetian air!

IV

Of yore within this town, so tradition tells, there dwelt a woman wicked, Veronica by name. Feared she was by one and all, and it was whispered low that round her home had murmurs strange been heard arise, and that angels of evil there in darksome night their pleasure took. — The sounds were nameless sounds, till then unheard by human ears, like unto the voice of dead within the tomb, by magic spell from sleep awaked; faint plaints from underground arising; distant rumours, songs, cries, tears, the clank of chains, and terrifying howls.

V

One stormy day, indeed, had dame Gertrude with her own eyes seen emerge from out a cloud a black fiend on lightning-bolt astride, who shot across the blood-red sky, and within the chimney, whence sudden rose vapours bluish, dash down head first with hideous

yell. The barn of Justus van Eyck, the farmer, broke into flames, that none might quench, and in its fall, an avalanche of fire, crushed to death four of the workers. And people worthy of belief do declare that Veronica stood there, laughing sardonic laughter and muttering sarcastic words.

VI

The wife of Cornelius, the brewer, before her time did bring into the world a child all covered o'er with loathsome hair, and of ugliness such that gladly would the father have seen it dead. 'T was said that on the woman brought to bed, and since that day sick continuously and in her bed lying, Veronica, by some foul, mysterious means, had cast an evil spell. — And truth to tell, her grim and treacherous mien more than justified these reports. Her eyes were green, her mouth a cave, black her teeth, wrinkled her brow, her fingers knotty, bowed her back, her foot misshapen and her legs yet worse, harsh her voice, and her soul more repulsive even than her frame. The Devil himself more hideous could not be.

VII

This ancient witch did a hut inhabit that crouched at the foot of a barren mound, exposed, in summer's heat as in winter's cold, to the four winds of heaven. The long-prickled thistle, the nettle and ivy spread around in mass irregular; upon it the grass luxuriant its swaying plumes did hang, while through cracks in roof and rifts in ceiling the rain, by obstacles unhindered, with its great drops the mouldy, rotten floors did flood. Within the window frame scarce one pane out of three might one note that unbroke was, and never could the door fast be closed.

VIII

Slimy slugs silver-traced the walls, the stones of which were cracked; the plaster kept breaking away. Lizards green and gray within the holes did lodge, and when night fell a high, piercing note was heard, that of the leaping frog, while the dun-eyed toads did hoarsely groan. — Thus it was that, on winter nights, once the dark had fallen, and especially when a fleecy cloud shrouded the horn of the crescent moon in mass of vapour, no one — not even Eisenbach the preacher

himself — dared to pass in front of the sinister den without shudder and pallor of fear.

IX

The interior worthy was of the exterior alluring: it was a pandemonium, wherein on one and the same row were jumbled together innumerable fantastic articles. There were lean bats with wings diaphanous, clinging to the walls with their four slight claws; broken-necked bottles, cracked earthen dishes, crocodiles, serpents stuffed, rare plants, alembics, twisted into shapes of the strangest, old manuscripts open lying upon limping chairs, ill-preserved fœti offending the nose from a mile away; their yellow, blue faces plastered against the glass of the jar.

X

It was a downright witches' sabbath of colours and forms, amid which the paunchy jar, with its huge sides, loomed like a river-horse, and the long-necked vial seemed to be an Egyptian ibis perched upon the edge of the sarcophagus of some Pharaoh or long-dead Magi king. It was a vision like unto a madman's dreams, or wrought in brain by opium, in which re-

ceivers, matrasses, syphons, and pumps, long-drawn like a phallus or twisted like trumps, assumed the appearance of elephant and rhinoceros; in which the monsters traced around the zodiac, bearing on their brows their name in Syrian, together boleros danced.

XI

A dusty heaping up of apparatus strange, of which the eye the baffling contours could trace, and of old volumes, with not one title in the Christian tongues. A medley, a chaos in which everything grimaced, was deformed, twisted, changed its shape; a mirror reversed, in which nought could be known, for all was transposed — red turned dun, white black became, and black to blue did turn. Never under an alcove did Smarra more hideous phantoms crowd: it was the realising of fantastic tales, the living embodiment of visions queer, Hoffmann at once and Rabelais.

XII

To make the picture complete, from the edge of shelves there grinned whitened skulls, with polished crowns, long teeth, triangular noses, and empty sockets which seemed to glare with hungry look. A skeleton

upright, its arms hanging limp, cast, as willed the light that streamed through the network of its ribs — scarce deserted by the inhabitants of the grave — its shadow in straight lines upon the wall. Had Satan's self entered there, heretic though he be, such ice-cold terror upon him would have fallen that, like a good Catholic, he 'd have crossed himself.

XIII

Yet to an artist a hell like this is a paradise. 'T was thence Teniers his "Alchemist" drew, and Callot many a motive for his "Temptation." 'T was thence Goethe got all that scene in which Mephistopheles leads Faust, eager his youth to renew, to the witch's den the potion to swallow. The illustrious baronet, Sir Walter Scott himself (Jedediah Cleishbotham), found in it more than one theme. The character he repeats constantly, Meg, in "Guy Mannering," is as like as two peas to our Veronica. All he did was to take her and to conceal her dress.

XIV

The chequered tartan plaid and the bonnet hide the skirt and the coif. Scotland has taken the place of

Flanders — that is all. Then he has stolen from me, the infamous plagiarist, this description (compare "The Antiquary"), the black cat — Marius on the ruins standing! — and many another touch. And I would almost swear that he who to the sublime the grotesque did wed, who created Bug, Han, Cromwell, Notre-Dame, Hernani, within this very hovel those masks did mould that, when one looks at their features fantastic, seem to have been done by Benvenuto Cellini.

XV

The cat, of which I have spoken in the preceding stanza, was the great grandsire of Mürr, the philosopher, whose story, intertwined with that of Kreissler, more than once has made me forget that the logs were putting on, as the fire died down, their robe of plush, that midnight was striking, and that it was winter time. My poor Childebrand, truest of friends, of cats the most tender-hearted, and endowed with the whitest soul that could be found under fur so black, that friend of mine whose death I so sorely mourned that since that day I have life hated, one of his heirs also was.

XVI

For the matter of that, this worthy cat was the one and only creature allowed within the den; the sole and only one for whom Veronica felt any love. And it may be that he alone in all the world her did love; for, indeed, old, ugly, and poor as she was, who else would have done so? Those we hate are wicked — that is excuse enough for us. — It is night; all is silence; a red light flickers and gleams on the hovel's pane. The cat, curled up on the broken-legged chair, watches with serious, intelligent gaze, the old woman who moves about and hastes to prepare some shameful mystery.

XVII

Or else, on his whiskers stiff his paw rubbing, smooths his coat, lustrous as ermine's, with the help of his rough, harsh tongue, and feeling chilly, between the andirons, close to the logs, his head under his tail, artistically himself curls up. — Meanwhile the wind without still moans, and with the strident sounds of the storm the orfrey mingles its screams. The roof creaks and groans; the logs crackle sharp; the flames swirl on high, and within the great caldron, under a

foam of flakes, dark, stinking water bubbles and boils, its sound accompanying the kettle and the feline's purr.

XVIII

Midnight is the hour appointed for the evil deed. Midnight now sounds. — Forthwith the infamous Veronica a circle on the floor draws with her wand, and in the centre stands. Outside the magic ring, phantoms innumerable, luminous dots against the hangings dark, tremble, like motes a sunbeam in the shadow reveals. — Meanwhile the hag her incantation mutters, utters fierce cries, speaks words the sound of which pains the ear as sledge-hammers wielded in a forge, and which scrape the throat like potions evil.

XIX

But this is not enough. To fulfil the mystery, she one by one her garments to the ground doth cast, and naked stands. A terrifying sight! A whitened skeleton swaying in the wind, and which has grinned for six months from the gibbet at the crows, is a cheerful spectacle by comparison with this carcass with its flaccid breasts, its yellow, sunken belly, wrinkled with large folds, its arms red as lobsters. "Horror! hor-

ror! horror!" as Shakespeare would say; a nameless thing, impossible to describe; the very ideal of nightmare grim.

XX

Within her palm the water dark she takes and thrice her bosom with it she doth anoint. Now, no human tongue can truly tell what then befell! — The flaccid breasts, that hung as hangs the skirt of well-worn coat, miraculously swell and round become; the cloud of tan is cleared away, and they might be an opal globe parted in twain, so fair the form and fair the tint. The blood courses in them in azure veins, life gleams in them so that even a maid of fifteen could scarce more blooming be.

XXI

Her eyes she rubs, her whole face next. Roses bloom once more; smallest wrinkles go, as vanish ripples when the breeze doth fail; her mouth with enamels gleams, and brilliant light, a fiery diamond, within her eyes doth flash; her hair is jet, her frame no longer bowed — she is beauteous now; so fair that she would envy excite. Many a gallant swain his life would peril merely to touch her fingers' tips, and no

one would dream, on seeing the lovely head, the body fair, the figure sweet, to what she owes them.

XXII

A very pearl of love! Great eyes, almond-shaped, at times most German in their sweetness tender, at times flaming with Spanish heat; two glorious mirrors of jet that make one wish to gaze within them one's whole life long. Her voice's tone more sweet than nightingale's lay; Sontag and Malibran, whose every note doth thrill and in the heart awake a secret note; Puck's roguishness, Ariel's grace, a winsome mouth whereon the smile mingles with Esmeralda's pout and mingling plays — a miracle, a dream of Heaven!

XXIII

Reader, hyperbole apart, she was truly beautiful — most beautiful! That is, she seemed so, and that the same thing is. Enough that the eye be deceived; it ever is by love; happiness due to fancy is the same as if mathematics proved it true. For what is happiness, if not to believe in and caress one's dream, with prayer to God that here below it may never wane? For faith alone heaven to us shows in our terrestrial

exile, and this desert of the world, in which felicity on nothingness is based as on reality is woe.

XXIV

The lambent flame upsprings once more. Forth from the circle Veronica steps, a tunic white slips on, and over that a purple robe. Upon her head, in place of the black cap she wore erstwhile, an ermine hood she sets, and a mirror in her hand taking, looks long within and with pleasure smiles at the sight she sees. The moon just then, through a break in the clouds, upon her cast her fond, chaste light. The door open stood, so that one might from without look straight within; and, haply, had any at this time strayed along the road, he would have made sure he dreamed awake.

XXV

Veronica, with the tip of her wand, touches the cat, which gazes upon her with bright, treacherous glance, and rolls at her feet, its back curling. Thrice she spins around, makes mystic signs, and whispers low, cabalistic words. Then is seen a sight that makes the blood run cold. In place of the cat, appears a hand-

some youth, — aquiline nose, forehead high, black moustache, — a youth such as maidens see in their dreams of love. His mantle is red and his doublet of silk, his Toledo blade has a sparkling hilt, — he undoubtedly is a sprightly lad.

XXVI

"'T is well," said Veronica, holding out her white hand to the young cavalier, who, hand on hip, in silence waited. "Escort me, Don Juan." — Juan bowed. — "Whither may I take you, madame?" — The lady bowed and whispered in his ear a syllable or two. Don Juan understood. — "Here, Leporello," said he in a loud, ringing voice. "Her ladyship goes forth. Take a torch and light her on her way." — Instantly, torch in hand, Leporello appears. — "Bring up the carriage." — They enter it, the whip cracks, the coachman swears, and they 're off.

XXVII

Off, but which way? That is a profound mystery. It was pitch-dark, and besides, in so dark a place who the devil could have seen them? No one, for all were asleep. The moon had bound a cloud across its eyes of blue lest they indiscreet should prove. So the

carriage reached the end of its way without any one suspecting whom it contained. Not a single splash of mud defaced the panels broad and blazoned ; the wheels, as if the stones had been covered with velvet and with silk, rolled on, silent, noiseless, through the fields straight on, and so lightly that they made no mark, that they nowhere the wheat bowed down.

XXVIII

For the nonce, the scene to Leyden is shifted. That petticoated monkey, that hag, hideous enough to make Beelzebub himself turn on his heel, now young and beautiful, incarnate poetry, treasure of graces, makes the fashionable beauties and middle-class Venuses of the place with jealousy wither, under their ample skirts, overladen with galloons, and their lofty caps, full six feet high. Empty are the rooms of Lady Barbara Von Altenhorff; empty are the halls of the young Countess Cecilia Wilmot ; there is no sign of a crush at the Landgravine of Gotha's.

XXIX

Young and old, lawyers in dusty wigs, dandies shedding around them the scent of amber, officers in gay

uniforms dragging their swords across the sounding floors, painters and musicians, all crowd to the stranger's rooms; and, although it was far from proper, as vinegary ancient prudes remark, thus to keep all men to one's self, especially when one had no other attraction than a piquant face and the beauty of youth, none the less men kept running there. The sole topic of talk in town was Veronica. Never was any name more frequently spoken.

XXX

When she appeared it was impossible to hear one's self for the enthusiasm, the delirium, the excitement, expressing itself in peals of applause and bravos and noise. Never did dilettanti from their theatre-boxes rain down more abundant praise, flowers, and verse on a prima donna than at every step fair Veronica at the dance, at the play, everywhere, received from her adoring admirers. The poets wrote sonnets to her eyes and called her "Sun" or "Moon" in acrostics; painters painted her face, and the rich ruined themselves in their rivalry.

XXXI

She gave the tone, the keynote of fashion. She was adored like an idol. In naught would any have dared

her to contradict. The shape of bonnets and the form of sleeves; which was better, flowers or feathers white; which the right jewels, which the most becoming, especially the important matter whether one should rouge or not, — she it was who decided all. The lady of the Margrave Tielemann Van Horn and the old Duke's daughter in vain protested by their heretical dress; scarce was there to be seen within their old-fashioned rooms a broken-down admirer ancient.

XXXII

Young would have become cheerful. Heraclites the weeper, wiping his eyes, would have laughed louder than Democritus at the comical sight of the efforts made by the ladies of the place, short and stout Irises, to dress as she did and to copy her grace. Maidens, the slimmest of whom weighed three or four hundred, — rubicund faces, with flowers, lots of ribbons and laces, masses of flesh (after Rubens' manner), — wearing instead of rich velvet and great pattern brocades, thin tissues, gauze, fleece-like stuff. Ye gods, what a masquerade!

XXXIII

But as for our heroine, she was invariably charming, whether adorned or not; whether veiled or cloaked; whether cape wearing or a hood. In short, in every way everything she had seemed endowed with life. The folds appeared to understand when they ought to flutter and when they ought to hang; the intelligent silk hushed its chatter or kept it up to warble her praise; the breeze blew just on purpose to make her fringes shimmer, and her feathers fluttered like birds about to take to flight, while an invisible hand her laces separated and played within their maze.

XXXIV

Her hair was always well dressed. Whatever she wore, — a mere trifle, the first thing she took, every bit of ribbon, every flower, — fairylike seemed to be; whatever touched her at once precious became; everything was in perfect taste and indicated quality. Whatever her dress, grand, rich, or quaint, she alone was noticed. Her eyes made the flash of diamond's self grow pale; her teeth were fairer than pearls, and satin lost its gloss when near her skin. With her port

so free, her teasing wit, her charm both coy and arch, she was in turns Camargo, Manon Lescaut, Philine, — in short, a ravishing wretch!

XXXV

Hans, Aulic counsellor, and Master Philip for her sake their gin, their pipe renounced. It was positively jolly to see these worthy Flemings, so perfect of their kind, stout, squat, their faces beaming, actually forgetful of their tulips, blooming at last, transform themselves into dandies and posture round the diva. Wives and mothers certes did not spare her bitter remarks, but serenely she kept on her way, none of her adorers losing, and, caring little for the empty talk, welcomed every one, and accepted the homage and the cash of each.

XXXVI

Two months have passed. On this day, like a queen, Veronica a headache boasts or pretends to have. Her door is closed. Her courtiers in numbers great are vainly waiting. Within a rich boudoir in which amber pastiles sweet perfume shed, and where every footfall upon the handsome Turkish rugs is noiseless as on sward, in which a silver lamp and the

hissing logs alone break silence with their shrill sound, our beauty in her morning wrapper, pale and white as pearl, bends over a table, a paper crushing within her hand.

XXXVII

She sulks. Ye gods, how bewitching is a woman when she sulks! Her hand under her chin, her elbow softly pressing one knee like the jasper rich, her body willowy bending, like a buttercup with a drop of dew o'er full. Her hair undone, that in a moment shows, or hides, perchance, as the zephyr through it blows, or the restless fingers through it move, the cheek, pearl-pink, transparent, the brow azure-veined; just as in great gardens the limbs of trees with their foliage veil or uncover the statues fair that stand under their summer shade.

XXXVIII

Whence, then, her grief? When she rose this morn and in her glass did look did she herself discover older or less fair to be? Did she find within her jet black hair one single pale silvery thread, or on her dazzling teeth a single stain? Did the two ends of the ribbon, when her hands drew them, prove too short for the

stouter frame? Has a dress she expected and on which she reckoned to take away the Count from Lady Wilmot,—has that dress been torn or crushed on its way? Is it her dog that has sickened? Or, after three nights at the dance, has fever paled the pure carmine of her lovely lips?

XXXIX

Is her glance less bright, her neck less fair, the form of her Greek face less pure? Has some rival, in greater youth or diamonds richer rejoicing, turned more heads at the last assembly? Nay, still, as ever, the queen of the feast she is. All at her knees do fall. But yesterday one of her lovers, filled with empty despair on finding her unfaithful, within the Rhine himself did headlong cast. This very morn for her sake did Ludwig Von Siegendorff a duel fight; his adversary 's dead; himself is wounded. Surely this is a great success; all Leyden is talking about it now. Why, then, her gloomy brow?

XL

Why do her brows tremble and bend? Why do her long, black lashes, as, half closed, between them

tears now slip, flutter and cast upon the satiny skin a brown aureole, a velvety shade such as Lawrence paints? Why do her troubled breasts within their gauze press and under the thin nets rise and fall, like snow when blows the storm? What strange thought imparts so dreamy an air to her lightsome face? Is it the remembrance of her first love and the voice of infancy? Is it regret that she has lost her fair innocence, or of the future is it dread?

XLI

Nay, it is not that. Too thoroughly corrupt is she not to forget, and broken is the chain that her past to her present linked. Besides, I do not believe there be in any recess of her soul a single one of those remembrances which in every woman's heart, howe'er depraved she may be, are left of better days, and remain spotless within the memory's depths like pearls within the waters black. She is but a coquette, she has never loved. A ball, a supper, a party, an entertainment to be given, pleasure, — these are the things that take her out of herself and prevent her hearing the voice of her oppressed heart.

XLII

Here is the trouble. The night before at the play was given Mozart's "Don Juan." Surrounded by her lightsome crowd of dandies young, — drawing-room butterflies whose wings by some Leyden tailor have been made, — Veronica was present, the cynosure of all eyes, coquetting within her box and radiant to behold. All women else under their rouge with rage turned pale, their lips did bite, but she, sure to please, like a peacock its tail spreading, her fan opened out, chatted, laughed aloud, let fall her glass, her glove took off, her scent bottle passed, or made its rich enamel flash and gleam.

XLIII

In vain the actors wrought with might and main, spun out their finest notes. They made no gain. Leporello step by step behind Don Juan walked in vain; in vain the Commander thundered with his boots, Zerlina warbled playing with the notes, and Donna Anna wept. They might have kept it up for a livelong year without any taking note. The stalls were inattentive. They talked, they looked, but looked another way. Through the gold-mounted glasses all

desires in the same direction turned. Veronica smiled. The joy of being beautiful made her ten times more beauteous yet.

XLIV

Alone a man, by a pillar standing, undisturbed, unamazed by the sensation great, from the forgotten stage his glance never taking, in a secret ecstasy deeply drank those wondrous chords, those glorious harmonies, which make thy name, O Mozart, shine over all! Thy genius his had seized and on its wings borne it to the eternal spheres. Of time, or place, or world, he unconscious was. Into music he was turned and his heart as it beat, fluttered and sang with purest voice, for he alone thy meaning caught.

XLV

At most, between the acts, upon the fair he coldly glanced; his eye flashed not, as if the look had struck against a wall. — Yet, like a bullet, swift-sped, that glance across the house to Veronica's heart shot true, and unconscious all, a grievous wound on her inflicted — a deadly wound. So falls the brave, by bosky corner slain, all gloryless, laid low by shot perchance at

some hare aimed; or killed by falling slate, or taken off by fever, as he to his home returns.

XLVI

She who, till then, like the salamander cold amid the flames, scarce deigned to give a passing caprice in return for passion, and made it her delight — for such is woman's pleasure, — hearts to torture and souls to damn; she who pitiless trifled with love as a cruel child with its plaything trifles, forgetting it and far away casting it so soon as it wearies, — she now was suffering the pains that yesterday she caused. She made men love her, and now she loved, and she who captured at last in her snare was caught. Her haughty heart at last was bowed.

XLVII

That is just the way of life, of fate. When on the fatal dial strikes the hour, none may his end for a day put off. No matter how virtuous, whether one flee or stay, all must yield to that power, infernal or celestial. Two things unavoidable are, — one's fate and love. Love, the joy and scourge of earth! sweet pain; sorrow one regrets, and so full of charms.

Laughter and tears; pallid, lovely care; ill, that all seek! A paradise, a hell; a dream, in heaven begun, on earth prolonged; an enchantment mysterious!

XLVIII

Oh, voluptuousness intense! Pleasure which, may-hap, of man God's equal makes! Who would not know you, if yet unknown, moments delicious and yet so short, that are a whole life worth, and which the angel that envies them would gladly pay for with an eternity of happiness in heaven. Oh, sea of felicity, ravishment, ecstasy, of which no words on earth can convey the bliss, whether in prose or eke in verse! Oh, hours of trysting! Oh, ye glorious sleepless nights, delirious sobs intoxicate! Sighs, strange words, lost in a caress! Kisses mad and wild desires!

XLIX

Love, thou art the only sin worth while incurring hell for! In vain in his sermons the priest condemns thee. In vain within her arm-chair, spectacles on nose, the mother to her daughter as a monster paints thee. In vain does jealous Orgon his door close and to his windows bars doth place. In vain, in still-

born tomes, do moralists endlessly cry out against thee. In vain coquettes thy power flout. When thou art named, the novice herself doth cross. Young or old, handsome or ugly, rosy-faced or pale, English or French, pagan or Christian, every one loves at least once in life.

L

As for me, 't was last year the frenzy of love fell upon me. Good-bye then to poetry. I 'd not time enough to use it to compass words. Four months and a half not another thing I did save worship my idol, adore her, wonder at her glorious hair, ebony waves in which my hands loved to lose themselves; listen to her breathing, watch her live, and smile when she smiled to me, drink deeper intoxication from the sight; read her nascent desires within her eyes, on her sleeping face note her dreams, and from her rosy lips sip her breath within a kiss.

LI

But for that the world would have had this poem in eighteen nine and twenty; nay, earlier yet; but, as I have said, I had not leisure to string words upon a verse like pearls upon a string. With her I was

wont to go into the great, deep woods to hear the thrushes sing, — for the time was spring. She, like a child, scampered through the dew in quest of butterflies; her ankles wet with silvery shower, she went singing on, as under her footsteps every flower its calyx gently bowed, and I upon her gazed.

LII

Within the rich green sward May the strawberry did crimson, and when she found one, happy and laughing for joy, quickly she ran to me that I might with her share, but I would not. Then came the battle. With one arm I seized her two wrists and her waist, and with my other hand forced her of the fruit to eat. At first she resisted, but soon wearying of the unequal struggle, for mercy begged, promising to pay a ransom of kisses; then, like the bird whose cage is opened, she 'd take to flight and escape, the witch, to conceal herself behind a bush.

LIII

Next I 'd hear her laugh amid the leaves at having tricked me thus. — Some busy bee emerging from a bell, a lizard, a grasshopper on its long slender legs springing, a caterpillar caught upon her lace, soon

brought her back uttering dreadful shrieks. Then she 'd hide her head upon my breast, quite pale, trembling when the branches in the wind did move. Her beauteous breasts with the beating of her heart trembled and fluttered like two little turtle-doves caught in their nest, and which flutter their wings lightly in the hands of the fowler.

LIV

While reassuring her, with practised hand the monster I would seize, and, her fear now gone, she 'd turn to laughter again, and, nestling on me anew, laugh at herself and kiss me as she said, " Ye heavens, how I love him ! " Then when I kissed her back, dreamy she leaned her head upon my shoulder and closed her eyes, as if to sleep away. The long beam of light pressing through the leaves gilded her lovely brow. The nightingale sang its pearly trills, and the scent-perfumed breeze softly breathed under the arches green.

LV

Never a word we spake and sad we both did seem, and yet if anywhere on earth happiness doth exist, we twain most happy were. But what could speech have served ? On ruddy lips the words we stayed ; the

thoughts we knew. We had but one mind, but one soul for the pair of us, and, as it were, in Paradise in one another's embrace locked, we could not dream other heaven than ours might be. Our veins, our hearts in harmony pulsed; in the ravishment of ecstasy profound the very world was well forgot; nor before our eyes did horizon spread.

LVI

Gone is all that happiness. Who 'd have believed it? Each to the other now a stranger is, for 't is the way of men, — whose Ever is never greater than a six months' span? Our love has flown, — Heaven knows whither. My goddess, like painted butterfly that flies and leaves but bloom of red and white upon the finger tips, her flight has taken, leaving in my heart naught but mistrust of the present and bitter remembrance of the past. But what of that? Love is a strange thing. In those bygone days I loved, and now I set my loves so fair in wretched verse.

LVII

Thus, gentle reader, is my whole story told most faithfully to you, so far as my memory (an ill-kept

register) can recall to my thoughts trifles that mean so much, for they make up love, and by and by we laugh at them. — Forgive this pause. The bubble I took pleasure in blowing and which floated in the air, gorgeous with prismatic fires, has suddenly faded out into mere drop of water, bursting when it touched the gable-roof's angle. Even so, when it met reality, my glorious dream was spent, and now for mother only have I love. All other affection in me has died out.

LVIII

Except love for thee, O Poesy, that speakest ever loud in chosen souls! Poesy! O golden-haloed angel, who, passing from one world to another without fear of soiling thy white form by contact with ours for a moment, within the gloom of our night thy flight dost stay; whisperest words to us, and with the tip of thy wing driest our bitter tears. And thou, Poesy's twin sister, Painting, God rivalling, and His equal, sublime deception, wondrous imposture, that life restorest and nature doublest, to you twain I do not bid farewell.

LIX

Let me to my theme return. The young enthusiast a handsome cavalier was in very truth, and certes a maid more chaste than Veronica might well for him love have felt. But before I go farther it might be well to sketch his portrait, for the outer form helps one to know what is within. Foreign suns had shone upon him and enriched with hue of tan his Italian skin, naturally pale. His hair, wildered by his hands' agitation, fell over a brow which Gall ecstatically would have felt for six months, and taken for base for a dozen treatises.

LX

An imperial brow of artist and poet; that of itself the half of the head did form. Broad and full, bending under inspiration which in each wrinkle untimely drawn, concealed superhuman power, great thoughts; and it bore written these words, "Belief and Power." The rest of the face corresponded with this noble brow, yet was there something in it unpleasant, and, faultless though it was, one wished it might have different been. Irony and sarcasm gleamed over it, rather than genius. The lower part the upper seemed to mock.

LXI

Strange the effect of this combination. It was like a demon under angel's tread writhing; hell under heaven opened. Though he had glorious eyes, long ebony brows towards the temples fining, over the skin gliding as a serpent crawls, a fringe of fluttering silken lashes, yet his lion-like glance and the fatal flash that shot at times from his eyes made one shudder and turn pale in spite of all. The boldest look must, perforce, be cast down before that Medusa glance which could change to stone, though gentle he strove to make it seem.

LXII

On his stern lip, shadowed at each end with a slight mustache, elegantly waxed, a mechanical smile at times rested, but, in general, his expression deepest disdain did plain betray. In vain the fair, having again in society met him, did all that in such case coquette may do to draw him to her feet. To her amazement, nothing could touch his adamantine heart. Glances from behind her fan, sighs, simperings, half-spoken avowals, teasing arch, — all failed, and utterly.

LXIII

He was not the man to let himself be caught in the nets Veronica tried to set for him. A great eagle scarce sacrifices a feather to the lime which a sparrow holds. The foolish fly is caught by the wing within the web the spider spins in corner dark, but the wasp the whole with her bears away, and Gulliver, with single effort, breaks the Liliputians' silken chains. Yet so fine a prey was well worth troubling for, so, if she did not plainly speak the words, "I love you," she tried every art. But he, unchanging still, on her bestowed no thought.

LXIV

This was the reason why her door to comers all was closed. For, indeed, what cared her anxious heart for her courtier train? These handsome fellows, these dandies, who before now delighted her, seemed at this time affected or vulgar, their perfumed madrigals wearied her. Noise and light to her brought pain; all things troubled and annoyed her. On her dainty hand she rests her brow; her dimpled arm upon her chair hangs limp. Poor girl! just see the pallor of her cheeks!

Grief her roses to pearls has changed ; within her eyes the tears begin to well.

LXV

The paper which the fair, with anguished mien, with rosy-nailed fingers crushes and crumples, unquestionably a love-letter is on azure vellum, which through the room sheds sweet and fashionable scent of amber. — I know all about it. — Yet the handwriting and the turn of phrase have something about them that tell of woman. Is it, then, a note intercepted from a rival, or does the lady on her own account to some young beau now write ? The latter fact seems proved by the black spot upon the white finger tip, by the inkstand, and by the raven's quill.

LXVI

Suddenly, bird-like looking up, and throwing back a curl astray, her indolent pose she leaves, and begins, before calling for light and wax to seal her note, to read again quite low, as if afraid the echo might understand. " I will not send it. I 've written it ill," she says, the paper tearing. Low is her voice. " It is only fit within the fire to go." It was very cold, the flames

were hot. The paper, like the damned in hell, flashed up in blaze of blue,

LXVII

And disappeared. — While the sheet is being consumed, the girl another takes, a moment thinks, and then begins. Her hand, as swift as race-horse at Newmarket, scarce the paper touches. She 's filled her page while yet the ink of the first words undried is. — "Don Juan!" — With uncovered head, Don Juan before the lady stands. — Veronica agitated, with her eyes burning bright: "This note to my lord Albertus." — "The painter who lives at the inn of the Monkey Green?" — "The same; and within an hour at farthest, Don Juan, see that you are back."

LXVIII

Albertus, I need not tell you, is the handsome swain I 've just described a few stanzas above. An artist was he, loving with passion fanatical painting and verse, to the full as much as music. Nor could he have told, had God the choice given him, which he would rather be, Mozart or Dante. But I who knew him as well as he did himself, — better perhaps, — I

believe that he would have said Raphael. For, of these three sisters equal in merit, at bottom painting was his favorite and his truest talent.

LXIX

He considered the world an infamous pot-house. What he believed about woman and man was what Hamlet thought, — he would not have given a copper for the pair. Womankind delighted him not, save in painting, and having since birth inquired the why and wherefore, he was pessimistic as the oldest of men might be; consequently, more generally sad than otherwise. Love was but an empty word to him; although quite young, still, for long years past, of belief in it he had still none. Thus within his days moved many hours of weariness.

LXX

All the same, his ills he patient bore. Great knowledge a very great scourge is sure to be; a child into an old man it makes. At the very outset of life, novice though one be, there is nothing new in what one feels; when the cause appears the effect is already known; existence is burdensome; all is savourless. To the

sick man's palate pimento tasteless is; the much-tried nostrils scarce can ether smell: love becomes a mere spasm; glory an empty phrase; like a squeezed lemon arid the heart becomes. Behind Werther Don Juan ever stalks.

LXXI

Our hero, like Eve his ancestress, had, by the serpent urged, tasted the bitter fruit. A god he desired to be. When naked he beheld himself and possessed in full of knowledge human, he longed for death, but his courage failed him, and as one tires of treading the well-known path, he sought a new road to discover. Now, did he find the world of his dreams? I doubt it, for in the search his passions he had outworn. He had lifted up the veil and glanced behind. At twenty he might have been laid in his coffin dark, of all illusions bereft.

LXXII

Woe! Woe! unto him who the fathomless ocean of man's heart imprudently seeks to sound! Too oft the sounding lead, instead of golden sand and pearly shells that lovely shine, brings up but foul and stinking mud. — If I could live another life again, certes I

should not within it all search out as hitherto I have done. What matters after all, whether the cause be sad, if the effect produced be sweet? Let us be merry; let us outwardly be happy. A handsome mask is better than an ugly face. Then why, poor fools, do we snatch it off?

LXXIII

If he had been the arbiter of his fate you may be sure that many a chapter of life's novel he would have skipped, and passed at once to the conclusion of this most foolish tale. But uncertain whether he ought to doubt, deny, believe, or seek in death the riddle's answer, like down wind-driven he let his life drift on as chance itself did will. The affairs of the world troubled him but little: the things of heaven interested him still less. As far as his soul went, I must tell you, even at the risk of your blame incurring, that he did not believe in its existence any more than in God's.

LXXIV

That was the way he was made — a nature strange — and yet his soul, which he disbelieved in, was pure. What he sought was nothingness; nothing would he have gained if hell had been suppressed. A strange

man indeed! He possessed every virtue he ridiculed, and the angel who, above, in his record indignant wrote some gross heresy, some damnable sophistry, when it came to deeds found him less guilty, and as he beheld within his nature the good and holy, once more the anathema withheld. For a fallen tear the blasphemy had blotted from the fatal page.

LXXV

Now, for a change of scene. — At present we are at the Green Monkey Inn, the abode of my lord Albertus, and in his studio. Tell me, most ordinary reader, do you know what a painter's studio is? — A tempered light from above falling gives everything an aspect strange. It is like a picture by Rembrandt, in which the canvas shows a white dot shining through the dark. — In the centre of the room by the easel, under the brilliant beam in which atoms whirl, stands a lay figure that might a phantom be. Everything half shadow and reflection is.

LXXVI

The shadows grow deeper within the corners than even under the old arches of a nave. It is a world,

a universe apart, in no wise resembling the world we live in; a fantastic world in which everything to the eyes doth speak; everything is poetic; in which modern art shines by the side of that of old. Beautiful things of every time and every land: a sample page, from the book out torn; weapons, furniture, drawings, casts, marbles, pictures, Giotto, Cimabue, Ghirlandajo, and I know not whom; Reynolds by Hemskerk's side, Watteau by Correggio's, and Perugino between the Van Loos twain.

LXXVII

Lacquered ware and vases of Japan, monsters and porcelain ware, pagodas golden with little bells all hung, glorious Chinese fans it would take too long to describe; Spanish knives, Malay creeses, with wavy blades; khandjars, yataghans with rich-wrought sheaths; lin-stock arquebusses, matchlocks, blunderbusses; helms and corslets, battle-maces, bassinets, damaged, in holes, rusted, stained; innumerable objects, good for nothing, but glorious to behold; Oriental caftans, doublets mediæval; rebecs and psalteries, instruments outworn: a den, a museum, and a boudoir in one!

LXXVIII

Around the walls many canvases hanging, untouched for the most part, others just begun ; a chaos of colours but half alive. — Leonora on horseback, Macbeth and the witches, Lara's children, Marguerite at prayer ; sketches of portraits, among which one framed, of a young girl, light on a dark background, stands out and sparkles ; so fair that one knows not by what name to call it, whether peri, fairy, or sylph, — a graceful, delicate being ; an angel from heaven whose wings have been clipped to prevent its flying away.

LXXIX

With her beautiful head and her thoughtful, resigned look, she seemed to be a *Mater Dei*, after Masaccio, yet it was only the portrait of a former mistress, the one he best and most loved ; a Venetian, who, in her gondola one night on the Canaleio had been stabbed to death. The beauty's husband, knowing her unfaithful, had planned the deed. The story was a regular romance. Albertus to the dead had drawn near, the black stuff pulled away, sketched the portrait, which he finished from memory, and then never again after of her spoke.

LXXX

Only when his eyes fell upon the canvas, concealed from indifferent glances by a curtain thick, a furtive tear, forthwith dried up, gleamed in them. A sigh from out his breast softly rose, his brows he bent, but ne'er a word did say. At Venice an Englishman dared make an offer; he would have emptied his purse the masterpiece to own, but that would have been to profane — *il Santo Ritratto* — and as he persisted and offered yet more wealth, Albertus raging sought to drown the man below the Rialto.

LXXXI

Albertus was painting. It was a landscape. Salvator would have named it *Selve selvagge*. Rocks in the foreground, in the middle distance the towers of a castle showing their sharp vanes against a blood-red sky filled with islands of clouds. The mighty oaks were bending like the lightest trees, leaves up in the air did whirl, the faded grass, like the rolling billows of a midnight sea, under its gusts did rise and fall; while incessant lightning with its red light lit up the tops of the blown pines, bending o'er the depths as over the mouth of hell.

LXXXII

A man came in. It was Juan. A blue light shone in the studio, and though he had no tail, nor horns, nor cloven foot, although he did not smell of pitch or sulphur, his eagle glance, his lip by grin sardonic curled, his gesture stiff, his voice, his gait, would have made any man at all prudent hasten quick to his Bible and sprinkle him with holy water. None of these things did Albertus do. He looked and saw him not, for his soul and his eyes on his painting were fixed. — "My lord, a note," said this devil Mercury as he pulled at his doublet.

LXXXIII

The painter the note opened, looked for a signature, and none did find. — "Base wretch," between his teeth he muttered. — "Will you go?" — "I will." — "When?" asked Don Juan in softened tone. — "Immediately." — "By Jupiter, that is the way to speak. The lady lives but a step from here. I shall lead you thither." — "It is well," said Albertus, taking down his sword, an Andrea Ferrara, a trusty blade tempered with the blood of many a brave. "I am with you. Pietro!" — A sunburnt face at the door

appeared and said: "What doth my lord will?" "Quick, bring here to me my cloak and hat."

LXXXIV

In less time than it takes to tell, the man was back. In a moment the young cavalier's toilet was done, and the valet having brought a mirror, he smiled, and with himself seemed well content. But suddenly, his complexion, always pale, a paler white did turn. Whether he saw it or merely fancied it — he 'd seen within the frame the Venetian lady's head move, and her mute lips ope as if she sought to speak. "Well, my lord?" said Don Juan. — "Dear one," the painter said, the portrait kissing with a sad, soft smile, "it is too late to draw back now."

LXXXV

The pair went out. Deserted was the town. Scarce here and there some open window. The rain with swift-falling drops the dark sky rayed; the north wind made every vane shriek and scream as in heavy weather scream the gulls. A belated toper went by, pitching up against the walls; a street girl at her corner waited. Albertus, silent and gloomy, followed Juan. Surely he

had neither the mien nor the gait of a lover; a thief to the gibbet led, or schoolboy on his way to punishment, never stepped more slow than he.

LXXXVI

He might to his place have returned, but the adventure after all was really strange and such as ardently to pique his curiosity; so our hero meant to see the end. The house was reached. Don Juan seized the brazen knocker of the postern door and knocked a master's knock. Black eyes, white brows, gleamed behind the panes. The house was illumined, and light flashed upon the darkened walls; from landing to landing the light came down; the bronze door oped, and the splendid, vast interior to the young cavalier's gaze was revealed.

LXXXVII

A little negro boy, a torch of perfumed wax holding, under the porch was standing, in rich and gallant livery of scarlet trimmed with gold. — "Here," said Juan, "fair page, lead his lordship by the secret passage." — Albertus followed. At the end of the corridor a curtain rich half drawn back behind him closed. Scenting his approach, two great white greyhounds on the carpet

lying, snuffed the air, raised their long heads, uttered low and anxious whimper, and then fell back and dozed.

LXXXVIII

Upon my word, it looked like the room of a duchess. Everything was to be found in it, — comfort, elegance, and wealth. On a handsome citron-wood table shone an alabaster lamp that cast around a soft and bluish light. Pearls, silks, a casket with steel knobs, rich sepias, bright water-colours, albums, screens delicately wrought; the latest review, the most recent novel, a black mask broken; innumerable fashionable trifles cast pell-mell were strewn upon chairs and tables in attractive disorder.

LXXXIX

Our inamorata, half seated, half lying upon a divan soft, uttered, as if surprised, a little cry when Albertus entered; then, her glance the mirror gaining, puffed out her sleeve and rearranged a disorderly ribbon. Never had the signora been better dressed. She was adorable, just fit to make recruits for the devil — as fit as society lady, nay, more. Her black and brilliant eyes showed

under their long eyelids such *morbidezza*, her manner, her gestures, such graceful abandon.

XC

For a moment Albertus thought he saw his Venetian fair. The strange head-dress, adorned in the Italian fashion with great golden balls and sequins pierced; the coral necklace, the cross, the amulet, the knots of ribbons, the whole dress; the rich-coloured skin with its warm, deep tones; the dreamy look, the lazy attitude; the glance identical, the speech the same. She resembled her so that he was deceived. Knowing Albertus and his temper eccentric, the witch had thought it well to assume this mask to slake her lust.

XCI

Veronica rang. The golden portière parted. A little page, a rich livery wearing, entered, trays in his hands bearing — a genuine Flemish page, a fair and rosy head like that seen in Terburg's painting in the Louvre. Upon the table he placed flagons and cakes, silver cups and silverware, poured the wine into glasses lofty, bowed to the lovers, and then withdrew. The wine was Rhine wine, whose golden robe was turning

yellow with age, a wine bottled at least an hundred years ago, or two.

XCII

Within the tankards it glowed like gold. A single glass would have sufficed a man to daze; with the second Albertus quite tipsy was. To his fascinated glance all things did double show, floating contourless in vapour dim; the floor uprose, the walls appeared to spin. As for the beauty, all shame behind her casting, and letting her lust a free hand have, with her passionate arms she clasped him round the neck, clung to his body in heat and madness, clutched at his head and tried to make him bend until her lips he met.

XCIII

Albertus was neither of ice nor stone; and even had he been, under the dark eyelids of the lady shone a sun whose fire would stone have vivified and melted ice. An angel, a son of heaven, to be in his place would have sold his stall in the paradise of God. — "Oh!" said he, "my heart burns with the strange flame that in your glance flashes, and my soul I'd give to possess you alone, wholly and forever. A single

word of your lips would make me renounce life eternal, for is eternity worth a single minute of your days?"

XCIV

— "Is that the truth?" answered Veronica, a smile on her lips and with an ironic look. "And will you repeat what you just have said?" "That to possess you, to the devil I 'd give my soul, if have it the devil would? Yea, madam, I 've said it." — "Then forever accursed be!" cried the young man's guardian angel. "From you I go, for no longer are you God's." — The painter in his madness heard not the voice, and the angel flew away. A glow of sulphur filled the room, and Mephistophelian laughter indescribable suddenly sounded in the air.

XCV

For an instant Veronica's eyes shone with darksome fire like those of orfreys in darkness hid. Albertus saw it not, for certes, had he beheld the glance, great though his courage, he would have crossed himself for fear, on beholding the wild and grim look, — for it was indeed a glance that spoke of unending evil, a glance of the damned, of the devil the time inquiring.

It read : " Ever, Forever, Eternity ! " Most horrible, truly. The eye of man blasted by such a glance would die and melt as melts the pitch within the furnace cast.

XCVI

Her lips trembled. It seemed as if some blasphemy were about to escape, when suddenly she said, " I love you," springing like a maddened tiger. " But know you well what is woman's love ? When you asked for mine did you test your soul ? Did you estimate aright the strength of your heart ? What mighty power within you do you feel capable of bearing such burden without fail ? ' Ever, forever ! ' Think again ! Within the wide universe but one being is capable of love eternal. That being is God, for He unchanging is. Man, creature of a day, but for a day doth love."

XCVII

Within the room, a beam from the lamp, stealing pale and faint upon the gilded walls, behind the curtains, discreetly drawn, a bed suggests. — Albertus, no word answering (the best reply, after all), thither draws her, and to the edge of the bed doth her gently push. . . .

Here in his shame-faced style a classical narrator, with embarrassment blushing, does not fail to stop. — What are not these worthy points made to say? Basilio never strikes them out on the ground that they are immoral, and in a novel chaste they stand as the hieroglyph of what is not particularly chaste, or not at all.

XCVIII

But I, who am no prude, and have no gauze or vine-leaf on my sentence to stick, not one thing shall I omit. — The ladies who this moral tale may read I beg will be indulgent to a few warm details; the wisest of them, I trow, will note them without a blush; the others will scream. Besides — and mothers of families will please take notice, — what I am writing is not intended for maidens young whose bread and butter is cut in slices for them. My lines are a young man's lines, and not a catechism. Emasculate them I will not; in their decent cynicism they go on, straight or crooked.

XCIX

Little reck I, provided my lady Poesy, their mistress absolute, finds them tickle her fancy; so, chaste like

Adam before the Fall, they onward freely go in their sainted nudity, free from all vice, and showing without fear all that the hypocrite world so carefully conceals. — I am not of those whom a bosom bared or a skirt rather short compels aside to look; my gaze on these things does not rest by preference. — Why declaim so much against an artist's work? What he does is sacred. — Pray, ye rigorous critics, do you see naught else than that?

C

The stay-lace the painter had cut. Veronica's lovely frame for sole vestment her Flanders linen now had on; a mere cloud of lawn; spun air; a breath; a mist of gauze, that under its network allowed the gaze to wander with delight; in a word, the flimsiest stuff you can think of. — It did not take Albertus long to tear away this rampart frail, and in a hand's turn he had his beauty nude. — He was wrong; it is spoiling one's own pleasure; this sort of thing is killing one's own love and its grave digging, alas! for too oft with the veil illusion and desire both fall away.

CI

Not thus this time; the lady was so fair that a saint in heaven would for her sake damnation have welcomed. A poet in love could not have thought out an ideal more perfect. — O Nature! Nature! by the side of thy work what is painting worth? What becomes of Raphael, of beauty the lord? What of Correggio, Guido, and Giorgione, Titian and all the names whose praise one age to the other sings? O Raphael, believe me, thy brushes cast away, and thou, Titian, thy palette. God alone the mighty Master is; His secret well he keeps, and none may make it out; in vain we strive.

CII

Oh, the lovely picture! — Blushing rosy red with shame, red as berry in May, upon her heaving breasts her head she bows and her arms doth cross — with her arch, roguish look, her little pout, her long fluttering lashes her cheeks caressing, her skin, browner showing 'gainst the white sheets, her long hair naturally curling, her eyes flashing with carbuncle's glow, her fair, golden neck, her coral lips, her Cinderella foot and her limbs

divine, and what the shadow hides and what may be guessed, — in her own self she more than a seraglio well was worth.

CIII

The curtains have closed again. — Frantic laugh, shrieks of voluptuousness, ecstatic moans, long-drawn sighs, sobs and tears, — *Idolo del mio cor! Anima mia!* my angel, my life! and all the words in that language strange which love delirious invents in its heat, these were the sounds one heard. — Wrecked was the alcove; the bed creaked and groaned; pleasure a very rage became. Showers of kisses and storm of movements lascivious; arms round bodies grappling and clutching; eyes flaming, teeth meeting and biting, breasts that convulsive bound.

CIV

The lamp flared up, and in the alcove's depths flashed, lightning-like, a red and tawny light. 'T was but for an instant, yet Albertus saw Veronica, her skin by burning marks all rayed, pale as though dead, and so disfigured that he shuddered at the sight. Then all once more dark became. The witch her lips to the young cavalier's glued again, and anew the couch bent

and creaked under love's bounds. — Midnight struck. — The sound mingled its shrill falsetto with the low lashing of the rain upon the window pane, and in the near-by tower hooted the owl.

CV

Suddenly, within his very grasp, — a prodigy fit to confound the strongest brain, — Albertus felt the charms of the fair melt away, and vanish the very flesh. Broken was the prism. It was no longer the woman whom all adored, but a foul hag with great green eyes rolling under eyebrows thick, and, to seize her prey, at full length stretching her long, thin arms, like hooks. Satan himself would have drawn back. A few white hairs hung stiff down her skinny neck; her bones showed plain under withered breasts, and her ribs stuck out of her sides so foul.

CVI

When he beheld himself so close to this living death, with terror the blood in his veins ran cold. His hair upon his head did stand, and his teeth chattered as though they would break. Meanwhile, the hideous skeleton her blue lips to his cheek pressing, everywhere

with strident laugh pursued him. Within the shadow at the foot of the bed climbed shapes most strange. Incubus, nightmares, ghastly, deformed spectres, deathly multitude of Goya's brains! Horned snails issued from beneath the bricks and silvered the old walls with phosphorescent slime; the lamp smoked and sputtered.

CVII

Instead of the gilded bedstead, a filthy couch; in place of the boudoir rose a little room of aspect wretched, with an old window frame of panes badly cracked; the walls, green with damp, were wet with rain, the great drops falling upon the grimy floor. Juan, a cat again, cast innumerable sparks, and fascinated Albertus with the gleam of his glance, and like the dog in Faust, waving around him magic bands, traced a brilliant circlet with his tail upon the hearth, upon which flickered a blue flame.

CVIII

Hop! Hop! cried the old woman; and down the chimney, suddenly ablaze with golden fires, two broomsticks, bridled and saddled, entered the room, in every direction kicking, caracoling, prancing, rolling, and leap-

ing as do horses by their master called. — " These be my English mare and my Arab steed," said the witch, opening her crablike hands and patting on the neck the broomsticks both. — A swollen toad with long slender paws the stirrup held. — Housch ! housch ! like grasshoppers swift the two broomsticks their flight do take.

CIX

Trap ! trap ! they go as goes the north wind. 'Neath them the earth shadows pass in long, grey lines ; above, the cloudy sky hurries by ; on the dim horizon strange shadows pass. The mill turns around and pirouettes. The moon, now full, shows her light like lantern dim ; a curious donjon underneath gazes ; a tree its black limbs outstretches far ; a gibbet haggard shakes its fists and follows, its corpses bearing ; a crow, croaking as it scents the dead, flaps heavily through the air, and with its wing strikes the brow of the young man dazed.

CX

Bats and owls, orfreys and vultures bald, great owls and birds of night with dun, flaming eyes ; monsters of all kinds yet unknown, strygæ with hooked beaks, ghouls, larvæ, harpies, vampires, and were-wolves,

impious spectres, mammoths and leviathans, crocodiles and boas, growling and snarling, hissing, laughing and chattering, swarming and gleaming, flying, crawling, leaping, till the ground is covered and darkened the air. — Less swift is the speed of the breathless brooms, and with her gnarled fingers the bridle drawing, "This is the place," the old hag cried.

CXI

The place was lighted by a flame, a blue light casting like that of blazing punch. It was an open spot within the forest's depth. Wizards in their gowns and witches nude astride upon their goats adown the four avenues from the four corners of the world arrived at once. Investigators into sciences occult, Fausts of every land, magi of every rite, dark-faced gypsies, and rabbis red-haired, cabalists, diviners, hermeceutists black as ink and asthmatically gasping, — not one of them all failed at the meeting-place.

CXII

Skeletons preserved in dissecting rooms, stuffed animals, monsters, greenish fœti, yet dripping all from their spirit bath, cripples and lamesters on slugs

mounted; man hanged to death with protruding tongue grimacing; pale faces beheaded, with red-circled neck, with one hand staying their tottering heads; every creature ever put to death (a dreadful blood-stained crowd); handless parricides in black veils shrouded; heretics grouped in tunics sulphurous; wretches on the wheel broken, contused and blue; drowned ones with marbled flesh — a sight most dismal to behold!

CXIII

The president in great black chair seated, with taloned fingers the leaves of his book turning, was busy backward spelling God's sacred names. The light that gleamed from his orbs of green the book illumined, and on the open page made the words flash out in lines of fire. They were waiting for the Master ere the fun began. All were growing impatient. He was slow in coming, and to the evocations seemed a deaf ear to turn. Albertus fancied he saw a tail, a pair of horns, goat's feet, great round eyes in lustre lacking, — an apparition horrid.

CXIV

At last he came; but no devil of sulphur stinking and of aspect terrific; no devil old-fashioned, but the

dandiest of fiends, wearing imperial and slight moustache, twirling his cane as well as could have done a Boulevard swell. You could have sworn he'd just come from a performance of "Robert the Devil," or "The Temptation," or had been attending some assembly fashionable. He limped like Byron (but not worse than he), and with his haughty mien, his aristocratic looks, and his exquisite talent tying for his cravat, in every drawing-room a sensation he would have made.

CXV

This dandy Beelzebub made a sign, and the company drew together the concert to hear. Neither Ludwig Beethoven, nor Gluck, nor Meyerbeer, nor Theodore Hoffmann, Hoffmann the fantastic, nor stout Rossini, of music king, nor Chevalier Karl Maria von Weber, could surely with all their genius have invented and written the wondrous symphony which these black dilettanti played at first. Boucher and Bériot, Paganini himself could not have embroidered a stranger theme with more brilliant pizzicati.

CXVI

Virtuosi with their dried, thin fingers made the strings of the Stradivarii sing again. Souls seemed to sound in the voices of the grave; cavernous gongs like thunder rumbled; a jolly sprite, his round face swelling funnily, blew in two horns at once; here, one strikes on a bone; the other, for a lark takes his belly for a drum, two bones for sticks; four little demons with iron bows make four giant double-basses roar and moan; while a stout soprano opes wide his gaping jaws. The result: a hellish row.

CXVII

The concert finished, began the dances. Hands with hands the chains did form. Within the great black chair the devil seated himself and the signal gave. — Hurrah! hurrah! The crowd, spurning the ground, howling and mad, dashed along like bridleless steed. The heavens, the sight to shun, closed their starry eyes, and the moon, in cloudlets twain her face now veiling, with fear from the horizon fled. Terrified the waters stayed, and the echoes' selves silent became, dreading the blasphemies to repeat which on that night they heard.

CXVIII

It was as though there whirled, aflame, through the dark, the monstrous signs of a zodiac sombre. The heavy hippopotamus, four-footed Falstaff, awkward rose upon its massive legs and broke out in lascivious gambadoes. The crippled, truncated and lame, leaped like toads, and the goats, livelier, performed entrechats and, graceful, kicked; a death's-head, with long, lean legs, trotted along like spider huge; in every corner swarmed some hideous thing; worms slimed over the trodden ground.

CXIX

Loose in the wind their hair, their cheeks aflame, the women twisted their bodies nude into postures infamous, whereat Aretino's self would have blushed. Hot kisses marked the bruised breasts and shoulders white; black hairy fingers touched the hips; sounds of lustful embrace over all arose; eyes flashed with electric glance; lips burned in lascivious pressure; fierce laughter, shrieks, guttural sounds rose in the air. Never did Sodom, never did Gomorrah loathsome darken the sky and soil this earth with more hideous unions foul.

CXX

The devil sneezed. To fashionable nostrils the odour of the company unbearable was. "God bless you," said Albertus politely. Scarce had he uttered that sacred name when phantoms, wizards and witches, sprites and gnomes, as by enchantment, into thin air vanished. With terror he felt sharp claws, fierce teeth strike at his flesh, from him torn. He shrieked, but his cry by none was heard. — On that morn, near Rome, peasants found upon the Appian Way the body of a man stone dead, his back broken, his neck twisted.

CXXI

Happy as a boy who has finished his task at last I 've got to the end of my poem so moral. — Are you as glad as I am, reader dear? In vain for two months past to bring this volume to a close my hand upon the sheet the pen did screeching drive; the unwilling theme but slowly went; the stanzas, lazily rocking on their golden wings, together came like swarm of bees, or else disorderly by the wayside idly fluttered. The numbers grew, one sheet upon another, — the ink undried still, — was laid, and I, all courage losing, to myself

kept repeating: "To-morrow, to-morrow 't will be done."

CXXII

This Homeric poem, in the world unequalled, presents a wondrous allegory profound. But if you the marrow wish, the bone you must break; to enjoy the scent the vase must needs be oped; the curtain be drawn from the painting it hides; and when the ball is done the domino's mask be cast away. I could have explained clearly every part, and to each word attached some learned gloss. But I take it, reader gentle, you 've brains enough to follow me. So, good-night. Close the door. Give me the tongs, and tell my man to bring me a volume of Pantagruel.

The Comedy of Death

THE COMEDY OF DEATH

LIFE IN DEATH

I

'T was All Saints' Day. A drizzle cold along the horizon's gloom like a thick woof spread its network gray; cold the north wind blew; scattered russet leaves fell fluttering from the branches bare of the stunted elms.

And each and all went into the cemetery vast and lone to kneel by the stone placed over the dead; there to pray to Almighty God for the rest of their souls, and with fresh flowers tearfully to replace the pale immortelles and withered wreaths.

I, who knew not the bitter grief of having buried either my mother or my sire under the withered turf, at chance I walked gazing at the tombs, or, through

an opening between the branches of the trees, at the city's swelling domes.

And as I noted many a leafless cross, many a grave on which the grass grew tall, where none to pray knelt down, with pity I was filled; with pity great, for the poor forsaken tombs which none on earth within his heart did bear.

No trace of green upon these slabs; and yet the names of widows desolate, or husbands in despair, their falsehood bare displayed to every passer's eye, with ne'er a trace of moss to veil their huge letters black.

And, as I gazed, within my heart uprose a thought which ever since has my soul possessed. Suppose it were true that the dead raging within their biers do twist about their knotty arms and strive to throw off their covers of stone with efforts incredible?

Perchance the tomb no refuge is where on pillow hard man may in peace at last forever sleep, forgetful of all worldly things, pleasure nor pain feeling, remembering not being or having been.

Perchance for sleep there is no desire; and when the rain filters downward to the corpse come the cold,

the weariness, and the lonesomeness of the grave. Oh! how sadly one must dream within that place, where neither moan nor breath can move the shroud's long, stiff folds!

Perchance, alive to the passions in us that once did blaze, the ashes of our hearts still feel and move within the tomb, and some remembrance of this world within the next bears with it a remnant of a life of yore with ours mingled.

These lonesome dead! No doubt they wives did have, some one both near and dear; some one to whom their thoughts they told. But, oh! the horror of their grief if ever they did awake within the depths of their tomb on which never a tear nor a flower doth fall!

To feel that one has passed away without leaving more trace than does the ship's wake on ocean's face; that one is dead to all; to see that the best beloved have one so soon forgot; and that the weeping willow with its long, bending boughs alone over one's grave mourns.

At least if one could, when the pale, wan moon opes its calm eyes with silvery glance, and earthward

looks and casts a bluish light, — if one could, within the cemetery's range, between the white tombs, the will o' the wisp o'er the grass flitting, under the branches stroll a while at least!

If one could home return within the house, the stage of the former life, and, chilled, by the fireside within the arm-chair sit; glance the old books over; within the desk rummage until the time when dawn the window lighting drove one back to coffin cold.

But no. Upon the mortuary bed one must remain, with covering none but the sheeted shroud; no sound the silence breaking save crawl of worm that slowly drags towards its prey, cutting its secret mine; no sight but night.

Then, if they be jealous, the dead, all that Dante has told of torments in his burning spiral would pleasant be to that they suffer. Lovers, who know what jealousy is, what tortures that frenzy means, imagine a jealous corpse!

Powerless and wroth! He is there, in his grave, while she, who was loved with heart's deep love, false to the oaths she swore, now in another's arms repeats

what she blushing whispered, when nestling close, with sacred words.

And to be unable to come, on a December night, while she is dancing, to cower in her room, and when she 's back, and slowly, smilingly, before the glass her dress undoes, to show within the mirror's depths one's skeleton and barèd ribs.

To laugh hideously with toothless laugh; to mark with cold kisses her heaving breast; and clutching her white and rosy hand with bony fingers, to moan these words, with hollow voice that human no longer is: —

"Woman, you made me promises numberless. Have you forgot them all? I, in my sombre grave, — I remember still. You told me, at the hour when death came to me, that soon you would follow. Weary of waiting, now am I here to fetch you!"

Within my mind's depths a strange thought, cancer-like gnaws and wears me out. Mine eyes sunken become; upon my brow are wrinkles new; my hair, my very flesh, from off my temples drop, — for hideous is the thought.

For death no longer, then, the great Consoler is. Man, even in the tomb, 'gainst fate has no recourse, and one may no longer cease to grieve for life by caressing the blessed hope of calm and peace after the storm and stress of life.

II

Within my brain these thoughts revolving, thoughtful I stood, with deep-bowed head against a tombstone leaning. Brand-new it was, and on the white marble shoulder of the weeping figure the willow's long branches like a cloak did fall.

The north wind leaf by leaf stripped the wreath, the remnants of which on the column's top did lie. They seemed like tears which their flowers shed upon the maid in life's springtime removed; a gentle morning bloom withered before noon.

The crescent moon betwixt the yews did shine; great black clouds the wan sky crossed and drove still on; the will o' the wisps flashed around the graves, and the weeping willow its plumes did shake.

Plain in the night sounds I heard from the nether world arising! Moans of terror and agony deep; voices entreating new flowers upon their tombs; asking how went the world, and why the widows left behind so long delayed them to join.

Suddenly — scarce could I credit my own ears, — from under the gaping marble, oh, terror! oh, wonder! I heard the sound of speech. A dialogue it was, and from the depths of the grave sharp, shrill tones mingled with another voice.

Chilled with fear I was. With terror my teeth chattered; my trembling limbs almost gave way, for I understood the worm with the dead girl, of a sudden awaked upon this winter night within her icy cage, its hymen was celebrating.

THE DEAD GIRL

Is this an illusion? Has the night so long dreamed of, the wedding night, come at last? Is this my nuptial bed? Surely this the hour when the groom, young and scented, enjoys the beauty of the bride and from her brows removes the maiden orange-flower.

THE WORM

A long, long night 't will be, O fair dead girl! To me for ever Death hath thee betrothed. Thy bed is but the tomb. Now is the time when bays the watch-dog at the moon; when the foul vampire sails forth in search of prey; when downward swoops the crow.

The Dead Girl

Oh! beloved, quickly come; long since the hour is passed. Oh! draw me to thy heart, within thine arms close pressed, for cold I am and full of dreadful fears. Warm with thy kisses my mouth which icy feels. Oh! come to my side; and room I 'll make for thee, though narrow is our couch.

The Worm

Five feet in length by two in width; the size was ta'en with care. The couch too hard is; the groom will never come. Thy cries he hears not; at a feast he is. Come, upon thy pillow quietly lay thy head and cross thine arms again.

The Dead Girl

What is the damp and breathless kiss I feel? That lipless mouth, is it a human one? Is this a living kiss? Oh, wonder! none to right or left of me! With horror my bones do quake; my whole flesh quivers as quakes the aspen when blows the wind.

The Worm

Mine is the kiss; the earth-worm I, here to fulfil the solemn mystery. Possession now I take. Thy

husband I 've become, and faithful sure will be. The gladsome owl, with strong wing the air beating, sings our wedding song.

THE DEAD GIRL

Oh! if only some one by the cemetery would pass! In vain I strike my brow against the coffinboards; the lid too heavy is. Sounder than the dead he buries deep the grave-digger sleeps. The silence is profound; deserted is the road, and echo's self to my cries is deaf!

THE WORM

Mine are thine ivory arms; mine thy fair white breasts; mine thy polished waist and glorious hips luxuriant swelling; mine thy little feet; thy hands so soft; thy lips, and that first kiss which thy maidenly shame to love refused.

THE DEAD GIRL

'T is over! 'T is over! The worm is here. Its bite makes in my side a deep, broad wound; my heart it gnaws. Oh, torture! Oh, my God! the cruel pain! Mother, sister mine, why come you not unto my call?

The Worm

Within their hearts the thought of thee even now is gone; and yet upon thy grave, poor deserted one, the orange flowers still brilliant are. The funeral pall scarce folded is, yet like yester's dream they have forgot — forgot thee and for ever.

The Dead Girl

Grass faster grows within the heart than even on the grave, and soon the cross and lowly mound alone recall the presence of the dead. But where the cross that tells of tomb within the soul? Forgetfulness, second death, annihilation which I seek, come unto me! I call for you.

The Worm

Be now consoled, for Death gives Life. Upspringing under the shadow of the cross the eglantine more rosy is, more green the sward. The flower's roots within thy frame shall plunge, and where thou sleepest, tall shall wave the grass; for in God's hands is nothing lost.

One of the dead their speech had wakened for silence called. Lightning, not from heaven, but from earth,

showed me within their tombs all the dead; skeletons of bodies with yellowed bones, or purplish flesh in tatters falling away.

Both young and old the graveyard's inhabitants, poor forgotten dead, hearing upon their tombs but the roar of the gale, and to weariness a prey within their dwelling cold, sought with sightless eyes to read the hour upon Eternity's mighty dial.

Then all to darkness turned, and on my way I went, pale at having seen so much; with doubt and horror filled; weary in mind and body both. And, ever following me, countless cracked bells like the voices of the dead swung out to me the moans they tolled.

III

To my home I returned.—Gloomy thoughts swarmed and swept before mine eyes, with icy-cold wings my brow touching, just as at eventide around cathedral spire the flocks of crows their spirals wind, and circle ever round.

Within my room, where quivered a yellow light, all things assumed forms horrible and weird, and aspects passing strange. My bed a coffin seemed; my lamp a funeral light; my cloak outspread the darksome pall, with holy water oft bestrewed within the doorway while a prayer is breathed.

Within its frame enclosed the ivory Christ, nailed with outstretched arms upon the sombre stuff, more pallid still became, and as on Golgotha in last keen agony, the muscles on the yellowed face stood out in anguish writhing.

All the paintings, their faded hues illumed by the hearth-fire's gleam, strange tones assumed, and with inquisitive air, like spectators within stage-box seated,

all the smoky old portraits, and dull-toned pastels their eyes now opened wide.

A death's-head, from the skull well cast, white stood out, grimacing, garish under a bluish beam. I saw it to the bracket's edge advance; the jaws seemed striving speech to use, the eyes to light with glance.

From the dark orbs (where were no orbs) flashed sudden sparklings dun, as from a living eye. A breath came forth from 'twixt its shaking teeth. 'T was not the wind, for straight the folds of curtains by the window fell.

Then, like the voice one hears in dreams, sad as the moan of waves upon the shore, I heard a voice; and as that day so many things I 'd seen — so many effects marvellous of unknown cause — my dread was less this time: —

RAPHAEL

I am Raphael Sanzio, the mighty Master. Oh! brother, tell me, can you my features know in this hideous skull? For there is nothing 'mid the casts and masks — these shining skulls polished like helms of steel — that makes me different from them all.

And yet, 't is I, 't is I, indeed: the youth divine, the angel of beauty and the light of Rome, — Raphael of Urbino, — the brown-haired lad you see in museums, idly leaning, dreaming, resting his head upon his hand.

Oh! my Fornarina, my fair beloved! who took with a kiss my soul in ecstasy to heaven ascending. This, then, is your lover — the handsome angel-named painter — this head with its strange grimace. Well, 't is Raphael!

If e'er, asleep within the chapel's depth, she were to wake and come when calls my voice, with fear she filled would be. Nay, let the half-raised stone upon her head fall again. Oh! come not, come not! but keep within your tomb the dream within your heart.

Accursed analysers! Race most vile! Hyenas that track the funeral step by step the body to dig up! When will you be done breaking open biers to measure our bones and our dust to weigh? Let the dead sleep in peace.

My masters! Do you know — but who could have told you? — what one feels when the saw's teeth

tear our palpitating heart? Do you know whether death is not another life? And if, when their remains from the tomb are dragged, the dead are satisfied?

So you come to search with hands profane our tombs which you violate, and to steal our skulls! How bold you are! Do you never fear that some day, pale and wan, the dead may rise and curse you there just as I curse you?

So you fancy that in the rottenness you shall surprise the secrets of mother Nature and the work of God? It is not by the body the soul can be learned; the body but an altar is; genius is the flame; and you the fire put out.

Oh! Child Christs of mine! Oh! my dark-haired Madonnas! Oh! you who owe to me your fairest crowns, saints in Paradise! The learned cast my skull upon the ground, and you suffer it, nor hurl thunderbolts at these wretches accurst.

So 't is true: Heaven its power has lost; Christ is dead indeed! The age Science for its God has ta'en; for faith, Liberty. Farewell to the perfume sweet of

the mystic rose; to love, farewell. Farewell to poesy of old; to sacred beauty a long farewell.

In vain our painters, to see how shaped it was, within their hands shall turn and turn my head again; mine, mine alone my secret is. Copy they may my tones; copy they may the pose; but two things had I that shall fail them ever, — Love and Faith.

Tell me, which of you, of this age infamous the offspring mean, can saintly render woman's adored beauty? None, alas! not one. For your boudoirs, the haunts of lust, lascivious scenes you need. Who e'er glances at you, virgins mine, so draped? Oh! my sainted ones, no man.

The time has come. Your task is done. Like a wan old man the dying age bewails and struggles on. The Angel of Judgment to his lips the trumpet sets, and the voice is about to call: "Let justice be done; mankind is dead!"

No more I heard. Dawn with opal lips, quite sleepy yet, upon the dullish window-pane a chill beam cast, and I saw vanish the vision strange as vanishes the orfrey, by sudden gleam startled, under a Gothic arch.

DEATH IN LIFE

IV

Death is multiform: its face, its vesture changes oftener than actress lightsome. Beauteous it can make itself, and is not ever a sickening carcass that groans toothless and makes grimace most hideous to behold.

Its subjects do not all within the graveyard dwell; they sleep not all on pillows stony under the shadow of the vaults; they wear not all her pallid livery; not upon all has the gate been closed in the gloom of the grave.

Dead there are of kinds most various. To some stench befalls, and corruption, palpable nothingness, horror and disgust, night profound and dark, and the avid bier, its jaws wide opening like gaping monster.

Others, whom one sees unfearful go to and fro in the sight of the living under their shroud of flesh, have the invisible nothingness, the inner death which none

suspects, which none doth mourn, not even nearest and dearest.

For when one goes into the cities of the dead to visit the tombs of the unknown or famous, the monuments or the mounds, whether or not there lie asleep forever under the sombre shadows of the yews some friend beloved, — whether one weep or not,

One says: — Behold, dead are these. Moss has spread its veil over their names; fast the worm its web doth spin in the sockets of their eyes; their hair has made its way through the boards of their biers, and their flesh in dust doth fall upon the bones of their forbears.

At night their heirs fear not they shall return; even their dogs now scarce remember them. Their portraits, with smoke befogged, with dust thickly covered o'er, in shops are strown away; those who once envy fierce to them did bear, their praises now gladly sing — for they are dead and gone for good and all.

The Angel of Sorrow praying on their tomb alone for them mourns with tears of stone, and as the worm

their body gnaws, so gnaws forgetfulness their name with silent tooth. For tester they six feet of heavy mould do own. Dead are they; of the dead they are.

Perchance a tear, from your heart escaped, upon their dust, snow-strewn, rain-soaked, slowly filters down, which joy will bring them in their sad home; and their dried up hearts, feeling they are mourned, faintly beat once more.

But no one says, on seeing the man who bears death within his soul, "Rest and peace be thine!" — What to the sheath is given, to the blade is denied. The body is wept for and the wound is soothed, but the soul may break and die without any feeling dread or giving it a tomb.

And yet there is an agony horrible that none can ever guess; there is grief incredible that eye can never see; there is more than one cross on the Calvary of the soul, without the golden halo; without the woman white ever prostrate below.

Every soul is a sepulchre wherein things innumerable lie; hideous cadavers buried asleep within rosy faces.

Tears are always found beneath the living smile; the dead behind the living are, and truth to tell, mankind is a cemetery.

The unburied tombs of old cities dead, the halls and wells of Hundred-gated Thebes not so populous are; nor are there to be seen skeletons more dread, or a greater mass of bones and skulls with ruins mingled.

Some there are with no epitaphs on their tombs, who of the dead as in the catacombs build up a mighty mound; whose hearts are but a level field, where no cross shows, nor memorial stone, and which blind Death with divers dusts confusedly doth fill.

Others, less forgetful, have funeral vaults wherein are ranged their dead, as in the vaults of Ghebers and Egyptians; around their hearts their mummies stand, the pallid features recalling of all their former loves.

Lovingly embalmed in remembrance pure, within themselves they guard the soul they loved, — a treasure sad and charming both. Death dwells in them in the midst of life; they ever seek the dear soul lost, which on them smileth still.

Where, if one searches, will a skeleton not be found? What hearth is there that every night beholds the family circle unbroken yet? Where is the threshold, smiling and fair though it be, that has not beheld the owner outward pass under the black pall, never again homeward to turn?

The little flower which joys now, offering its blooming lips to kisses of the snow, the daughter is of Death. Perchance its roots into the ground from some loved dust have caught the scent divine that charms so much.

Oh! betrothed of yesterday, that are lovers still, the place where nest your loves has served like you some old man grim. Before your soft sighs had waked its echoes his death-rattle it heard, and the remembrance an odour sepulchral mingles with the sweet bridal perfumes.

Where shall we tread and not a tomb profane? Even if we had the wings of the dove, were swift-footed like the deer, and the waves traversed like the flashing fish, everywhere would be found the hostess, black and white, ready to receive us.

Oh! cease then, ye mothers young, to cradle your sons in the arms of bright imaginings; cease to dream of brilliant future for them. Spin them a shroud with the thread of their swaddling-clothes; for your sons, were they pure as angels and fair as they, to death are all condemned.

V

Amid sighs and moans and groans let us descend to its very depths the gloomy spiral and all its accursed turns. Our guide is no Vergil, the master poet; no Beatrix towards us her lovely head doth bend from distant Paradise.

For guide we have a wan-faced virgin, who never was kissed by golden tan from lips of sun. Colourless her cheeks, bluish her lips; alabaster white the nipples of her breasts, but rosy never.

A mere breath sways her delicate form; her arms, more translucent than jasper or agate, languidly hang by her side. From her hand escapes a withering flower, and folded on her back her diaphanous wings motionless remain.

More sombre than night, more staring than stone, under her ebony brows and her lashes long shine her two great eyes. Like the waves of Lethe, dark and silent flowing, her loosened hair her ivory flesh enfolds with silent clasp.

Upon her brow, the linen bands — chaste and simple ornament — with hemlock leaves and violets are twined. For the rest she is nude, and one laughs and trembles on seeing her approach; for her look sinister and alluring at the same time is.

Although she has lain in every bed on earth, under her wreath of white barren she still remains since eternity began. The burning kiss dies out upon her fatal lips, and of her virginity, the pallid rose has none e'er plucked.

She is the one that leads to tears and to despair; she is the one who from mother's lap doth take away her burden sweet and dear; she is the one who jealous lies between lovers twain and wills that in her turn she wedded be.

Bitter she is, and sweet; wicked she is, and good. On each illustrious brow she sets a crown, fearless and passionless. Bitter to fortunate ones; to the wretched sweet; alone she brings to mighty grief its consolation.

She gives a bed to those who, through the world, like Wandering Jew, are walking night and day and

sleep have never known. To all pariahs she opes her inn, and Phryne welcomes as she does the virgin; foe and friend as cordially receives.

Following the steps of this guide with face impassible, onward we go adown the spiral terrible towards the bourne unknown, through a living hell that knows not cave nor gulf, nor burning pitch, nor seas with sulphurous waves, nor great horned devil.

Here against a pane there is a light as of a lamp, with the shadow of a man. Let us the stairs ascend, draw near and see. "Ah! 't is you, Dr. Faustus! in the same attitude as Rembrandt's wizard in the sombre painting that gleams with light.

"What! have you not broken your alchemist's vials? Do you still bend your great, bald, sad brow over some manuscript old? Do you still seek within your book, by the light of that sun mystical, the word cabalistic that makes the Spirit rise?

"Tell me, has Science, your mistress adored, to your chaste desires yielded at last? Or, as when you first

met, do you kiss of her dress but the hem or eke her slipper? Is there yet in your breast asthmatic breath enough for a sigh of love?

"What sand or what coral has your lead brought up? Have you sounded the depths of this world's wisdom? Or as you drew from your well did you in your pail bring up nude, fair Truth, until now ignored? If you are a tree, where then are your fruits?"

FAUST

I have plunged within the sea, under the vault of the waves. The great fishes cast their fleeting shadows down to the water's depths. Leviathan lashed the abyss with its tail, and their lovely blue hair the sirens combed upon the coral reefs.

The hideous cuttle-fish and the monstrous polyp their tentacles all out-stretched; the shark and the orc enormous their great green eyes on me did turn; but to the surface I came again, for my breath failed me. A heavy mantle for aged shoulders is the mantle of the seas.

From my well limpid water alone have I drawn; the Sphinx, as I question, still silent is. Pallid and broken down, alas! I am still at *perhaps* and *I know not*, and the flowers of my brow are fallen like snow on the place where I have passed.

Oh! woe is me, that I, unguarded, tasted the golden apples of the tree of Science, for Science is Death. Not the upas of Java's isle, nor Afric's euphorbias, nor the manchineel that gives magnetic sleep, a stronger poison hold.

In nothing, now, do I believe. And when you came, for very weariness my study I was renouncing and ready my furnace was to break. Within my being not a fibre now thrills, and like a pendulum my heart alone doth beat with movement unchanging.

Nothingness! This, then, is what at the end one finds. As the tomb doth hold the dead, so doth my soul a living cadaver contain. It is to reach this point that I such pains have taken, and that, profitless, my soul to the winds I've scattered as scattered is the grain.

A single kiss, oh! fair and gentle Marguerite, snatched from thy blooming mouth, so fresh, so small, is better worth than all of this. Seek not for the Word which in the Book has never been, but know how to live, forget not that you must live. Love, for that is all!

VI

The endless spiral within the depths doth plunge. All around, waiting but for the wrong answer ere your blood they suck, upon their great pedestals with hieroglyphs strewn, sphinxes with pointed breasts, with fingers armed with claws, roll their glittering eyes.

As one passes before them, at each step one stumbles on old bones, on carrion remains, on skulls that hollow sound. From every hole there issue stiffened limbs; and monstrous apparitions hideous flash through the darksome air.

It is here that Oedipus the riddle yet must solve, and that still is awaited the beam that shall dispel the darkness of eld. It is here that Death its problem doth propose, and that the traveller, her pallid face perceiving, draws back in affright.

Ah! how many noble hearts and souls so great in vain through every poesy and every passion all have sought the answer to the fatal page. Their own bones lie there with no sepulchral stone, with no inscription carved.

How many, Don Juans unknown, have filled their lists and still seek on! How many lips turn pale under kisses sweetest, which have never pressed their fancy's lips! How many desires to heaven from earth have returned, forever unappeased!

Students there are who would all things know, but who for valet and teacher never Mephistopheles find. In attic rooms are Fausts without their Marguerites, whom Hell repels and God casts out. Pity these, oh! pity them all.

For they suffer, alas! from ill incurable, and a tear they mingle with every grain of sand that Time lets fall. Their heart, like the orfrey within the ruins' depths, moans within their weakened breasts a hymn to despair.

Their life is like the woods when autumn ends. Every passing wind from their crown doth strip the last touch of green, and their weeping dreams go silent, floating through the clouds like flock of storks when winter draweth nigh.

Their torments never in poets' songs are told. Martyrs of thought, they bear not round their heads

the shining aureole; and on the ways of earth they lonely march, and on the frozen ground they fall as snow doth fall when in the night it comes.

As on I went, my thoughts turning over, sad and speechless, under the icy vault, along the narrow way, stopping suddenly my companion said, as she stretched out her hand so frail: — "Look whither my finger points."

It was a horseman with a waving plume, long curling hair and black moustache, and spurs of gold. He wore a mantle, a rapier, and a ruff, like the ruffling blades in days of Louis Treize, and seemed still young.

But on looking close I saw that his wig, under the false brown hair upon the neck, allowed to show the whitened hair. His brow like face of ruffled sea was wrinkled; his cheek so hollow that all his teeth did show.

In spite of the thick rouge with which it was covered, — as marble is o'erlaid with rosy gauze, — his pallor was plain to see; and through the carmine his lips that coloured, under his forced laugh 't was plain that every night hot fever did him kiss.

His staring eyes seemed eyes of glass ; they nothing had of earthly look — nor tear, nor glance. Diamonds they were, set within his gloomy lids, and shone with cold gleam and unchanging brilliancy. An old man in truth he was.

His back was bowed, as bowed as arch of bridge; his feet were sore and swollen by the gout, his weight able scarce to bear; his pale hands trembled as tremble the waves under the North wind's kiss, and let slip the rings too big for his fingers grown.

All this luxury, all this rouge upon the sunken face formed a combination monstrous both and strange, and dark was the sight and uglier yet than coffin in courtesan's home ; than skeleton adorned with robe of silk; than old hag in a mirror glancing.

Entrusting to night his amorous plaint he stood below a darkened pane beneath a lonesome balcony. No white brow against the glass did press ; no sun of beauty did its face unveil within the open depth of heaven.

" Tell me, what do you there, old man, in the darkness ; on a night when the funeral swarms fly forth

from out the tombs? Pageless and without torch, whom seek you so late, so far, at the hour when the Angel of Midnight in the belfry sings and weeps?

"You are no longer at the age when all smiled and welcomed you; when, petal by petal, virgins scattered at your feet the flower of their beauty; it is no longer for you that windows are oped. You are fit for naught but by your ancestors to sleep under the carven marble tomb.

"Hear you not the owl its shrill cry uttering? Hear you not in the woods the great, hungry wolves howl? Oh! foolish old man, return; it is the moment when the moon wakes the pallid vampire upon its golden couch. Return to your home, return!

"The mocking wind your song on its wing away hath borne; none to you is listening, and adown your mantle stream the tears of the gale." — He answers nothing. — "Oh! Death, tell me who this man may be, and know you the name by which he is called?" — "That man is Don Juan."

VII

Don Juan

Oh! happy youths whose heart scarce opes as doth the violet to the first breath of smiling spring; milk-white souls like maybloom sweet, where, in the welcome sunshine and in the silver rain, all warbles and all blows.

Oh! all ye who your mother's arms do leave without knowing life and knowledge bitter and who seek all things to learn, — poets and dreamers, more than once, no doubt, on edge of woods, as your road you took in sunset's splendour;

At that lovely hour when on branches swaying the white doves bill and the bullfinches nest; when weary nature sighs and falls asleep; when, like a lyre when the strain is done, the leaf in the breeze quivers;

When calm and forgetfulness on all things fall; when the sylph returns to its pavilion of rose under the perfumes nestling, — moved by these things and of restless ardour full, you have longed for my lists and my conquests all. You have envied me

The feasts, and the kisses on shoulders nude, all the sensuous pleasures to your age unknown; exquisite torments dear! Zerlina, Elvira, Anna, the jealous Roman girls, England's fair lilies, Andalusians brown, all that lovely flock of mine.

And then the voice of your souls did ask of you: "How did you do to have more women than Sultan ever owned? How did you manage, in spite of bolts and bars, within the bed of lovely maids to sleep? You happy, happy Don Juan!

"You forgetful victor, a single one of those, whose name you put not down, one of your least fair, your most modest flower; oh! how well, how long, we should have adored her. She would have adorned, as within an urn of gold, the altar of our heart.

"She would have scented, that humble violet whose head your foot within the grass did bow, our own pale springtime. We should have picked up, and wet with our tears the blue-eyed star, that in the ball-room had fallen from your inconstant hand.

"Oh! wondrous tremors of the fever of love; doves that from heaven upon the lips alight; kisses so bitter-

sweet; last veils falling; and you, glorious waves of golden hair, flowing over shoulders brown, when shall we know you?"

Ye children! I have known all these pleasures you dream of; round the fatal tree Eve's serpent of eld did not more closely twine. To mortal eyes never did human-headed dragon the fruit of that forbidden tree make shine with greater brilliancy.

For, like nests of finches tame, ready their flight to take, on lips I 've caught nests of timid loves; within my arms phantoms ravishing I 've pressed; many a blooming virgin upon me has outpoured the purest balm of her calyx white.

The truth to find, ye cunning courtesans, I 've pressed under the rouge your lips more worn than stones upon the road. Ye loathsome sewers, to which flow the whole world's streams, within your depths I 've plunged; and thou, Debauch so foul, thy morrows I have known.

I 've seen the purest brows prostrate sink, once the orgy done, amid the outpoured wine upon the cloth red-stained. I have seen the close of balls, and arms per-

spiring, and pallid faces more wan than death under their rumpled hair when rose the sun.

Like the miner who works an oreless vein, by day, by night the depths of life I 've searched, and never struck the lead. I 've asked of love the life it gives, but all in vain; and ne'er on earth have I affection felt for one who bore a name.

Many a heart I 've burned, and on its ashes trod; but like the salamander, cold amid the flames I did remain. I had mine own ideal — fresh as dew, a vision golden, an opal, by God's own glance iridescent made;

A woman, such as sculptor never wrought; herself a Cleopatra and a Mary too, in modesty, grace, and beauty all; a mystic rose, wherein no worm did lurk; a burning volcano to stainless purity of snow allied!

At the fateful parting of the ways, Pythagoras' Y, the left road 't was I took; and though onward I travel, yet the bourne I never reach. Deceitful Sensuality! 't was thou I followed, and it may be that the riddle of life could be solved, O Virtue, by thee alone!

Why did I not, like Faust, within my cell so dark, gaze on the wall at trembling shadow of microcosm golden? Why did I not, books of old and magic works reading, by my furnace pass the darkness' hours in seeking pleasure?

Strong was my mind: I could have read thy book and drunk thy bitter wine, O Science, without being intoxicate, as young student well may. I should have forced Isis her veil to remove, and from heaven's heights brought down the stars within my sombre room.

Listen not to Love, an evil teacher he. To love is not to know; to live is to know. So learn, and learn still more. Cast and cast again the lead, and plunge yet deeper down within the depths profound than did your elders e'er.

Let Leviathan through its nostrils blow; let the weight of the seas within your breasts your lungs sharp pierce. Hunt through the black reefs that no man yet has known, and in its casket golden the ring of Solomon perchance you 'll find.

VIII

Thus spake Don Juan, and under the icy arch, wearied, but resolved the end to reach, I took my way again. At last I entered on a gloomy plain which a fiery sky on the boundless horizon closed with circle of carmine.

The soil of the plain was ivory white, and cut by a river like a silken band of richest red. It was level all; nor wood, nor church, nor tower; and the weary wind swept it with its wings and uttered plaintive moans.

A first I thought the tint so strange, the blood-red hue with which the stream thus flushed was but some reflection faint; that chalk and tufa formed that ivory white. But as I bent to drink, I saw it was real blood indeed that flowed.

I saw that with whitened bones the earth was covered o'er, a chill snow-fall of death, where no green plant, no flower, did grow; that the soil was made of the dust of men, and that people enough Thebes, Palmyra, and Rome to fill were sleeping there.

A shadow with bowed back, bent brow, passed with the wind. He it was unmistakably, with coat of gray and little hat. An eagle golden over his head did soar, seeking, thereon to rest, anxious, bewildered, the standard's staff.

The skeletons sought to put on their heads; the spectral drummer its sticks rattled in time with His sovereign step; a clamour vast rose as he passed, and cannons countless roared in the storm their triumphal brazen blast.

He seemed not the tumult to hear, and like a marble god, of its worship careless, walked on in silence sunk. Sometimes only, as if by stealth, his eyes looked up and sought in heaven his star now fallen.

But the heavens, purple with the conflagration's light, showed never a star, and the growing flames kept rising and rising higher. — Then, paler still than when in the St. Helena of old, his arms upon his breast he crossed, full of muttered moans.

When he came before us, "Mighty Emperor," said I, "the mysterious word which fate compels me here below to seek; the last word which Faust of his

books did ask, as Don Juan of love, the word of Death or Life, can it be you know?"

—"Oh! wretched child," said the imperial shade, "return above. Icy cold is the wind and chilled through am I. Along this road no hostelry you will find where you may warm your feet, for Death alone receives those who this way pass.

"Look, 't is all over. The star eclipsed is. Black blood falls in showers from my eagle's side, wounded in its flight, and with the white flecks of the eternal snow from the depths of the sombre skies the feathers of its wings downward flutter to the ground.

"Alas! your desire I can never satisfy. In vain the word of Life have I sought, like Faust and Don Juan. I know no more than on the day of my birth, and yet, in the heyday of my power, it was I that made the calm and storm.

"Everywhere I was called above all men, THE MAN. Before me the eagle and the fasces were borne as before the old Roman Cæsars; there were ten kings that bore my train; I was a Charlemagne within a single hand the globe embracing.

"No more have I seen from the top of that column where my glory, a tri-coloured rainbow, gleams than you can see from below. In vain with my heel I spurred on the world; ever rose the sound of camps and the roar of the guns, of the stress of battle and storm.

"Ever came on salvers the keys of the towns, ever a concert of bugles and servile cheers, of laurels and speeches; a black sky, with rain of shot, dead men to salute upon the battlefield, — thus were spent my days.

"How bitterly did your sweet honey name, oh! my mother, Laetitia, belie my fortune woeful! How wretched I! Everywhere I bore my wandering pain; I had dreamed of Empire, and the globe of earth did hollow sound within my palm.

"Oh! for the lot of a shepherd, and the beech under which Tityrus during the heat of the day withdraws and sings of Amaryllis. Oh! for the twinkling bell and the bleating flock, the pure milk flowing from the udder white between the fingers fair.

"Oh! for the scent of the new-mown hay and the smell of the stable; for the brown bread of the herd and for nuts on the table, and a platter of wood! For a seven-hole flute put together with wax, and of goats half a dozen — that the sum of my desire; I who have been the conqueror of kings.

"A sheepskin my shoulders shall cover; Galatea laughing shall flee to the reeds and I pursue her. Sweeter than ambrosia shall be my verse, and Daphnis shall with jealousy pale at the sound of the airs I shall play.

"Oh! I long to go to my Corsican home; through the wood where the goats, as they roam, the bark of trees nibble; down the gullies deep, along the hollow way where cicada shrilly sings, careless in its wandering, my ranging flock following.

"Pitiless the Sphinx to whomsoever fails. Imprudent youth, do you mean that it shall slay you and drink the purest blood of your heart? The only one the fatal riddle who guessed slew his father Laïus, and incest committed. Such the victor's sad reward!"

IX

Now I have returned from that sombre voyage, where through the darkness for torch and for star one has but the eyes of the owl; and, as after a day's ploughing the buffalo returns with slow steps and worn, and head bowed down, I go with shoulders bowed.

From the land of phantoms I have returned, but still to wear, far from the speechless realms, the pallid hue of death. My vestments, like the funeral crape cast upon an urn, hang limp adown my frame unto the ground.

I have escaped from the hands of a Death greedier far than that by Lazarus' tomb which watched, for what it takes it keeps: with the body parts, but the soul retains; the torch returns, but the flame puts out; and Christ Himself would powerless prove.

I am no more, alas! but the shadow of myself; the living tomb wherein lies all I love; and alone, for I survive myself. I bear about with me the ice-cold remains of my illusions — lovely dead for whom I make a shroud.

I am yet too young; I must love and live, O Death! I cannot yet resolve to follow thee adown the darksome way. I have not had time to build the column on which Glory my crown to-morrow morn shall hang. O Death, do thou later return!

Oh! white-breasted virgin, thy poet spare! Remember, I the first did thee make more beautiful than day. Thy greenish hue, to diaphanous pallor have I changed; under glorious dark hair thine old skull concealed; and thee have I courted.

Oh! let me live a while and thy praise I 'll sing: thy palaces to adorn, angels I shall carve and crosses forge. Within the church and within the graveyard the marble I 'll make weep, and the stones shall moan as upon a regal monument.

I shall devote to thee my loveliest songs; ever for thee bouquets of immortelles and scentless flowers I 'll have. My garden, O Death, with thine own trees is planted, — the yew, the box, the cypress, over the marbles twine their green-brown boughs.

I tell the handsome flowers, sweet glories of the beds, the lily majestic its white cup opening, the tulip golden,

the rose of May the nightingale doth love, I tell the chrysanthemum, too, and many another still, —

Grow ye not here; another soil now seek, ye fresh springtime loves; for this garden austere your brilliancy is too great. The holly's painted leaves would wound you and in the air the hemlock's poison you 'd imbibe, and bitter scent of yew.

Forsake me not, O Mother, O Nature! A time of youth thou owest to every creature; a season of love to every soul. I still am young and yet feel the chill of age; I cannot love. Let me have my youth if but for a single day.

Be no stepmother to me, O Nature beloved. Let some sap return to the faded plant that hates to die. The torrent from mine eyes with its tears has drowned its worm-eaten bud which sunshine does not dry and which fails to bloom.

O virgin air, O crystal air, O water, principle of this world! Earth, that feedest all! and thou, fertile flame, a beam from God's own eye! let not die yet, ye who life bestow, the poor drooping flower that seeks no more than for a brief time to blow.

Stars that from above behold the whirling worlds, rain down on me from your lashes golden your diamond tears! Moon, lily of the night, flower of the garden divine, pour thy rays upon me, O fair solitary, from the uttermost depths of heaven!

Eye ever open in the centre of space, do thou pierce, O mighty Sun, the passing cloud, and that I may see thee once more let the eagles through the heavens that swoop on mighty wing, the griffins that fiery fly, the swallows swift, to me their wings now lend!

Ye Winds! that from the flowers their soul's perfume steal and avowals of love from lips beloved; pure Air of the Mountains, still full of the scent of the balsam; Breeze of the Ocean which one breathes so free, my lungs now fill!

April has made for me a grassy carpet whereon to lie; above my brow the lilac blooms in clusters great, for now is springtime come. Take me within your arms, sweet poet's dreams; between your polished breasts my poor head rest, and cradle me long.

Be far from me, nightmares, spectres of the nights! Roses, women, songs, — all things fair and loves glori-

ous, — these are what I want. Hail! O Antiquity's Muse, Muse with the fresh green bays and tunic white, that younger art every day!

Brown with lotus eyes; fair with eyelash black, O Grecian girl of Miletus, upon the ivory stool place thy fair bare feet, and with golden nectar let the cup be filled. To thy beauty first I drink, Theone white, and then to the gods unknown.

More lascivious and yielding than the wave, thy bosom is! Milk is not whiter, nor apple rounder. Come, one sweet kiss! Make haste, make haste, for our life, O Theone, is a winged steed by Time spurred on. Let us hasten our life to use.

Shout, Io, Pæan! . . . But who is this woman under her veil so pale? Why, 't is thou, infamous hag! I can see thy skull so bare, thy great orbless sockets, loathsome prostitute! eternal courtesan! clasping the world with thine arms so lean.

THÉOPHILE
GAUTIER

BORN · 1811
DIED · 1872